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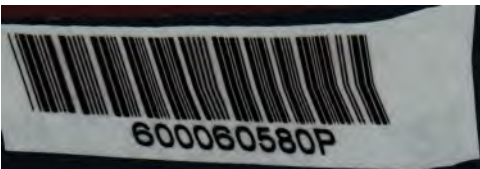
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The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is a deep red color. A decorative black border with a repeating geometric pattern frames the central area. The title 'THE MORRICES' is printed in a black, serif font with decorative flourishes on the letters 'T' and 'M'. The spine of the book is visible on the left, showing some wear and the binding structure.

THE MORRICES







THE MORRICES;
OR,
THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

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THE MORRICES;
OR,
THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

BY
G. T. LOWTH,
AUTHOR OF
"AROUND THE KREMLIN,"
&c. &c.

"Exception proves the rule."



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE Wick was about six miles from London, on the Thames, near Kew. The Wick was much like many an English country house of the present day, what might be called a composite house. There was a tradition that it had once been a monastery; and certainly a large building, separate from the main edifice, but now connected with it by a long low range of offices, wore very much the appearance of a refectory. There was indeed a hazy memory floating about this separate building, that it had been the

chapel of the monks. There was nothing especially ecclesiastical about it, with the exception of the tall narrow windows, which were in a degree graceful in their form, and would have been suitable to an office of a monastic edifice. Anyhow, it was a finely-proportioned and lofty apartment or hall ; and one could easily imagine the monks' tables crossing it from side to side, the hooded men seated and enjoying, with due humility, the good fish from the river hard by, besides, perhaps, other and more sustaining food from the rich pastures on its banks.

There was not much to support the tradition ; but still there it was, perhaps as substantial as many another which hangs about old buildings, and imparts to them a grace and an odour of sanctity they do not really deserve.

This traditional refectory or chapel was now the kitchen. There was an immense

cellarage, on arches, colossal in its substance, and on which the whole *corps de logis*, or main body, of the mansion rested. If tradition spoke the truth as to the former monastic uses of the house, here was room for an enormous stock of good liquors, for the sustaining of the non-ascetic brethren.

The successors of the monks were of Dutch origin. The amount of walling about the place was something immense. Firstly a wall, high and broad, started from the river's edge, and ran due east, for nearly half a mile, in a direct line, at right angles with the stream ; then it turned to the south, and ran for about two-thirds of a mile, when it turned again to the west, and followed a direct line till it almost struck the river once more. A broad osier bed here intervened between the wall and the water. Within this was The Wick.

A neighbour once said that within this

space there was brick-work enough to build a town; and when one looked at the walls of gardens, of stabling, of cattle-houses, of gardens within gardens, of farm buildings, of raised terraces, of sunk fences, of covered rides, of breweries, of flower-houses, and summer-houses in the grounds, the amount of it was almost enough to justify the statement. Of course but little of this had belonged to the monastery; but there were many evidences that a large share owed its existence to those eminent and picturesque builders with brick, the Dutch.

"I am a sceptic about those monks," said Frank Morrice one morning at breakfast to his father. "There is not much to show for their story."

"The kitchen," replied Mr. Morrice, in a half apologetic tone: "it is totally different from anything else about the premises."

"Very negative," observed Frank, sentimentously.

"Yes; but there is a serious hiatus between that and the body of the house. All those offices are clearly of a later date."

"Proves nothing for the monks, as monks. I don't care about the monks—dirty, greasy old creatures; and such arrant humbugs, too!"

"Don't you abuse my monks," said Mr. Morrice. "I have a liking for their memory. You are young, Frank; and I have the old fancies of an aging man for old things. Monks, as individuals, I have no love for; but, as a community about the old place in former days, they are something tangible and belonging to it—as a memory; and so I have a kind of feeling of fellowship with them."

"Well, Dad, I give you the monks. Now the Dutchmen, that's another affair. There

we touch bottom. They left their marks."

"Marks ! why, their handywork stares one in the face in every direction. I suspect all this tremendous amount of brick-work is their doing."

"I have a theory," said Frank, "that from what I hear of their cities and country generally, the Dutch are direct and lineal descendants from those enterprising men in Mid Asia who built Babylop. Rawlinson, and Layard, and others, all agree that the mighty mounds are only brick-heaps—palaces and halls all in a heap."

"You may laugh at the Hollanders, but I have a conviction that all these fine substructions beneath this house, as well as the greater part of the premises, are of the doing—some Bentinck, or Keppel, or Germaine, or some other of William's friends. Whoever he was, he was a grand builder."

"I quite agree in one thing—that he did

his work regardless of expense, and laid out his money freely and well."

"The man must have been a prince in his work,"—the elder Morrice was eloquent on this theme,—“the whole place marks the labour and the taste of a master-mind in landscape. Look at the trees in the park. Once they were all in regular lines, avenue upon avenue—Dutch in their style essentially. Avenues of walnut, avenues of Spanish chestnut, avenues of beech, avenues of yew, with a grand fringe of elm enclosing it all. And then that fine grove of towering arbores by the river, no one but a Dutchman would have planted them ; and so well is it all done that nowhere can you see more than a small piece of the boundary-wall at a time."

"How about the haha?" said Frank ; "is that Dutch?"

"That is their usual dividing fence in their level country ; that, with its im-

mense length, and the summer houses in all directions; one on the river bank, from which he could look over the water at the barges and boats, as they floated up and down,—all this was dear to the heart of a Hollander."

"Yes," said Frank; "and as if the river was not water enough for him, he must needs make a lake."

"Quite true, and a beautiful thing it is, embedded in its woodland. The expense of forming that lake, with its high long causeway to separate it from the river, and the walling and planting it, must have been enormous. And then his flower-garden, why, it is a Dutch gem. You may see now any day in Holland the precise counterpart of it. He evidently made this garden in such a form that he could at any time, when in it, forget England and the land of the Britons, and get away to his loved Holland."

"It is a quaint little garden, and delightful," said Frank.

“There is nothing more quaint and pretty anywhere, with its formal parterres, and its rose trees and lavender bushes at the angles, and the old-fashioned sun-dial in the centre; that long heavy orange house too, with its large windows, and the tall Haarlem gates of iron work, of scrolls, and wavy leaves, and curling grasses, are precisely what I saw only last year as I glided along a Hague canal in one of their passage boats. When the Hollander was in his little garden, shut in by the trim hedges of laurel and hornbeam, and his orange house and his Haarlem gateway, he was at home and happy. Then look at his orange-walk just outside his Haarlem gate. The very name has come down with his beautiful and secluded walk, named after his orange trees, which of course were wheeled out in the summer, and formed an orange-grove.”

“My dear Dad, I begin to think you have

some of that Dutchman's blood in your veins; and, if the truth were known, you are jealous of him, and would be glad if he had left you some walling to do." And Frank walked off laughing. The elder man smiled as he said, half-aloud,

"That boy is as fond of the place as I am—perhaps more so, if that is possible, for he has never known any other home, and he never cares to be long away from it. But that way of talking is the odd humour of the lad. Just let anybody abuse the old place, or even the monks, and then see what a storm he would raise."

The fact was that Frank had been quietly ransacking some boxes of old papers in the library, with the object of discovering something about the abused monks, but to no purpose.

There were papers, however, which Mr. Morrice had found, which showed that an

owner had succeeded the Dutchman, who was Italian in his tastes. Not content with the Dutch mansion of red brick, he had covered it with white stucco. He had raised the long, low building, and made it lofty; and he had daringly built a grand Ionic portico at the front, with an imposing flight of steps. The result of this was an interior of irregularities, ups and downs, fine rooms and dark places. Pines and cedars took their place among the trees on the lawn. A pavilion of fine stones rose in the grounds by the water-side, in which was a noble banquetting-room, overlooking the river, and Roman busts and Greek urns looked classic, but sad and discoloured, among the shrubs, and by the trunks of the Dutchman's towering elms near the house.

So The Wick was a composite house—an edifice of many builders. You could imagine yourself at one moment among the

genial monks in the kitchen refectory, and at another with the man of the Greek or Latin race, in the noble portico, or the Albano Pavilion ; and at another with the Hollander at Haarlem, when within the pretty and secluded inclosure by the flower-house. At The Wick Mr. Morrice had passed, for many years, his even and uneventful days ; and Frank had grown from youth to manhood, a lad always of impulses—of good impulses—but which ever lead a man into scrapes, out of which he has to escape as well as he can. His father, thinking over the character of his son, would always close his cogitations with this reflection, “ Anyhow, he can always come to me as his best friend ; and so long as he does this, his heart will not be far wrong, and that is the main thing.”

CHAPTER II.

IT was a raw, damp afternoon in the beginning of October. A mist, chilling and penetrating to the bones, had all day filled the air. As usual there was no wind, and a dead silence seemed to wrap every object as in a fold ; as if the Azrael of nature were performing some dark and secret operation, and had thrown a cloak over her external form to conceal his doings, and was working out his evil ends in stillness and gloom. Perhaps on the morrow, when the cloak was lifted, things in general would be not what they were, and the usual conditions of matter be changed—the light of the sun be lurid, and the moon rolled in blood,

and the earth refusing her juices for the food of man. The imaginative mind might suspect anything. It was a day of melancholy, favourable and encouraging to suicides. Of course there were a good many—somewhere.

It was on this afternoon that Frank Morrice was walking down home from London to The Wick. As he neared his home he had turned off from the high western road, and followed a by-way between hedges and black thorn. There was mud everywhere, on the wheel track and on the narrow foot-way. The hedges on either hand were saturated with wet, and bright large drops of water hung from the twigs. Here and there an elm rose from the low line of thorn-bush, and stretched its dripping branches over the the path and road. An occasional twitter of some dispirited hedge-sparrow was the only sound in the silent road, telling its mate

what a very miserable state of things it was.

But as Frank advanced, there came to him through the mist the dull sound of a hammer—thump—thump—from the river.

“Ah,” said Frank aloud, “there’s old Sangster at work ; good old boy, always at work, morning and evening, sunshine and fog. I like to hear the ring of his hammer—somehow it makes the dullest of days seem lively.” So he walked on. “There it goes again—thump—thump ; there’s a music in it, though it isn’t Haydn, nor yet Mozart ; the clang and the echo of the old man’s hammer at his work have the music of home in them. How those worthies in Pall Mall would laugh if they heard me say so ! Some cranky old barge that he’s patching up for some Johnson and Co. of the Surrey side, or some Dixon and Co. of the Tower Wharf—Hark !” Frank stood still and listened. “They ought

to hear me. I'm near enough; but I suppose this thick damp air don't carry." At that moment the deep bay of a dog was heard. "Ah, they've found me out." And he gave a long shrill whistle. In a minute this was replied to by the loud and sharp barking of two deep-voiced dogs, their acknowledgment of the familiar challenge. He was a quarter of a mile from home, but the practised ear of his favourites, or something even keener than that, told Lion and Duchess of his approaching footsteps. Another long whistle told them they were heard, and produced fresh and wilder challenges.

It was still too early in the day for the dogs to be loose—watchdogs of the Newfoundland breed—so Frank contented himself with a talk and a caress for each as he went through the stable-yard; and then he passed on by the flower-garden to the lawn beyond. As he went he turned into a gar-

den out-house, and put some apples in his coat pocket. Crossing the lawn, he approached the drawing-room windows, raised high above the ground, where he could see the light within shining through the chinks of the shutters. Tapping with his stick on the glass he merely said, "Home, Dad." A voice from within cheerily replied, "Frank, my boy," and Frank walked away across the lawn.

There were grass grounds stretching away on the western side of the house, with a long slight slope to the river, at a couple of hundred yards distance. These grounds also spread out to the south for about the same distance to the sunk fence, or haha, and beyond this lay the park.

Between the house and the river, masses of trees intersected the slope, and a grove of towering arbores ran all along the water's edge. In the park was some grand old

timber, oak, and walnut, and Spanish chestnut. On the western side of the park, towards the river, there extended along its whole length a high raised bank, with a low boundary wall, the further end of this bank forming a causeway—a lake on one side, a broad osier bed on the other. The boundary-wall of the park was low on the inner side, only five feet high ; but on the outer side it was twelve. From end to end of this raised bank ran a grove of beech-trees, which threw their branches over the low wall. Between the wall and the river was the osier bed, about a hundred yards in breadth. All round the lake was rough ground, commonly called the Wilderness.

As Frank now walked across the grass, he came to the haha, and jumping down this, he went on into the park, musing.

“ Dear old Dad,” he said, half aloud, “ how he likes this place—quite content with it,

and his books, and his gardens, and a friend or two now and then from town, and his horses. I call him a true philosopher—never idle—always at something; never unhappy—takes the world as it comes—always looks on the bright side of things; and also, which is highly philosophical, never worries me with dull, unnecessary advice.”

Thus he went on soliloquizing. Presently he reached a low hill, and stopping at the top, he gave a long, high-pitched Swiss cry, such as the herdsmen on the Grand Scheidek use to their distant herds at milking time.

“I wonder where they are this misty evening,” said Frank to himself; and then he repeated the cry with a long, sustained note. “Hark!—here they come!” and his ear detected the distant sound of horses galloping over the turf. “Here they come, straight as darts! I’ll be bound they would come straighter through this mist and fog

than I could go to them, with all my high and mighty humanity. Empress first, for a hundred! I hear her call as she comes. Yes, apples, my dears—you know the smell and the taste of them—pippins to-night, and no carrots for little Liz.”

And in another minute three or four fillies were round him, pushing their muzzles into his hands and his pockets, and quarrelling for precedence. Having emptied his pockets, and talked to each separately, much to the satisfaction of all parties, Frank was about to return to the house, when a fancy took him to try to find his way to the beech-grove, and the causeway, and the lake. He had lately had more than one little adventure at dusk down in the Wilderness—with men who came on shore from barges moored in the river, on marauding expeditions for fish in the lake, or fruit from the walnut and chestnut trees in the park.

Now it struck him that this was the kind of evening for such doings, favourable to the practices of these Mohawks of the Thames; and so he turned away from his young friends, with words such as he would have used to so many children—"All gone—more to-morrow—no more pippins to-night, Empress. Now, you be good, and don't bother. I'll tell you what, you two, Liz and My Lady, if you go on worrying me for more pippins, you shan't have any more for a week." So he turned towards the beech-grove and the wall.

But Frank was not at all sure of his direction, for a mist is almost as puzzling as a fog; and now darkness was coming on too. After he had left the haha a hundred yards he was in total uncertainty as to his whereabouts; so getting back luckily to the haha, he coasted this till he reached its termination at the raised walk and the

beeches. Here was a gate by an old-fashioned Dutch summer-house. He hesitated a moment whether he would go on to the lake in this mist, or turn homewards through the gate. A fancy—a nothing—led him on under the beeches. Going on a little distance, he thought he heard some sound on the river, so he stopped and leaned over the wall, and looked out over the osiers towards the water. Everything was still on the river, and the only sound he heard was the drip from the saturated trees on to the dead leaves at his feet. Then out of the darkness came a dull roll of chains on the deck of some barge up the stream, and then some distant cries of voices from some houses far down the river on the far shore. Suddenly he heard what seemed a low cry from the water. Presently it came again—the plaintive cry of a young dog. “A dog in the river,” said Frank to himself. In a

moment more it rose again—a wailing cry—a cry of distress. “That’s a pup,” said he—“that’s a pup’s cry. How the deuce can one be all down here?”

Beyond the river there ran from Kew to Mortlake the towing-path—not a house on it.

He considered a minute, and then Frank had taken off his coat and laid it on the wall—his hat too—and dropping down to the outside, he was plunging among the osier stools. He was so accustomed from his boyhood to the river bank and these osier beds, the ditches and water-cuts among them, that he threaded his way with tolerable ease in the fading light through them to the bank. All along the edge of the osier bed there was a perpendicular muddy fall, irregular and reedy, of eight feet. It was a treacherous bit of ground in daylight, and it was not difficult, even then, to make

a blunder and get into a slough of mud up to the armpits. In some places the bank receded a few feet, forming small bays ; these were the pitfalls. In others it projected a little beyond the proper margin, and here was often a strong osier-stool, with its rods stretching out over the water. By good luck Frank hit the bank at one of these.

Frank stood a moment to listen. The cry of the pup came distinct and clear, now rapidly going down the stream, and apparently some forty yards from the shore. Frank strained his eyes down to see the water, but the mist and the darkness made it totally invisible to him. He could only hear its whisper and its murmur as it crept along the sedgy bank below him. Being well acquainted with the river, he knew that the tide was running out, and was now more than half down, and also that the river bed

was gravel beyond the mud of the bank. So he swung himself out clear by an osier rod, and found himself in water nearly up to his middle, and began wading out. Frank knew the river well; he had been on it at all hours of the day or night from his boyhood, but it was a novelty to find himself out in the dark, cold stream, unable to see a yard before him, and only feeling the invisible thing like some living being, murmuring and gurgling, and creeping round his limbs. As he went plunging on, the question to himself was this—"Is the pup beyond the ditch or not?" At a certain distance from the shore, about thirty yards, there ran a deep cutting or ditch in the river bed. Frank knew that if the pup was on the near side of this, he might reach him by wading; but if he was on the far side of it, then there was deep water and a swim in store for him. By day he could measure

the distance of the ditch, but in the dark he could only feel for it with his feet. It is not comfortable to know that in a moment from safe footing you may go down into black water ten feet deep, on a chilly October evening in the dark.

But there was no time for much thinking, the cry of the pup was becoming fainter, and was still some yards ahead of him, when Frank felt the ground as it were suddenly give way under him. It was the ditch. To save himself from going down he struck out vigorously, and in a dozen or two strokes was close upon the chase. As he neared it he spoke to it, and it pleased him to hear a change in the wail like a little sharp bark of knowledge that help was near. If it could but hold up during another ten strokes it was safe. Presently Frank had his left hand under the small creature, and felt its struggles to grasp it. Treading water for a

minute, he raised the pup in the air with both hands, pressed off the chill water from its back and sides, and then, placing it across the back of his neck, struck out for land. The little animal kept up a perpetual small moan of contentment at the change of matters.

There was no difficulty in Frank's finding his way back even in the darkness. As the tide had washed his right shoulder as he went out into the stream, so now all he had to do was to keep his left shoulder to its wash as he turned homewards. Soon he found himself across the ditch again, and standing in shallow water, and the pup in his arms. But now, where was he to land? It was impossible for him to climb the muddy eight-foot bank in the dark into the osier bed, so he must wade down-stream for some little distance, and land where there was a creek ran up, and where there was a

sloping shelf of turf; or he must wade upstream to where the osier-bed commenced, nearly opposite the old-fashioned Dutch summer-house.

Whilst he was hesitating which way he should choose, and trying to imagine relative distances, he heard a boat coming down, the sculls working rapidly and irregularly in the rowlocks, and in the splash of the water. It was near him, though he could not see it. Presently a boy's voice in the boat said—

“He be gone down—I be sure he be. I don't hear un no more.”

“You pull on,” said a young female voice—“pull on, Sammy; he isn't down—I'm sure he isn't.”

“I tell 'ee he's down,” said the boy.

“He's not—I hear him!” said the girl, passionately, her heart still hearing the sound she wished to hear.

Now it was clear to Frank what had happened; the pup had fallen overboard from some barge moored in the stream, and here were the children looking for it.

"Hallo, my lad, what are you after there?" shouted Frank.

A dead silence. The voice out of the darkness alarmed those in the boat.

"Lost anything?" said Frank.

"Yes, a pup," said the boy—"he felled overboard."

"Just pull here," said Frank, "and see what I've got."

The boy instinctively obeyed the tone of voice and the words, and pulled the boat's head round, and in a few minutes the dark bows were under Frank's hand. How readily children distinguish and feel a tone of voice!

"So you've lost a pup, have you? How did that happen?"

"We was a-laying up here, sir," said the boy, "and we missed un, and Su here said as she heerd un cry down stream."

"Is that the pup?" said Frank, feeling his way down the boat-side, and reaching it out to the figure in the stern.

"Oh! yes, sir," exclaimed the girl, in a tone of delight, as she felt the pup in her outstretched hands.

"Look here," said Frank, "I'll get in and pull your boat up to the top of the osier-bed, and get out there, and that will be all in your way back. I suppose your barge is lying up here somewhere?"

"She be up a goodish bit," said the boy. So Frank got in, and took the sculls, and in a few strokes was creeping up under the osier-bed in slack water.

"Susan isn't fond of the pup, I daresay, is she?" said Frank.—No answer.—"Else

she'd have kept a better look-out than to let him fall overboard."

"Indeed, sir, I'd just given him his supper," said the girl, roused at this insinuation, "and I hadn't left him one minute, just to fill father's pipe."

"The pup's jist all over the barge, d'ye see, sir," said the boy, "all day. He've a bin in the water twice afore; he must ha' come a long way this go for you to ha' picked un up all down there."

"What's the name of your barge?" said Frank.

"The 'Columbine'."

"And who does she belong to?"

"The master works her for Wilcoxes, below Southwark Bridge."

"You've got your head up-stream now, and are waiting for the turn, I expect. You'll be off in about four hours."

"Yes, sir; it turns at ten."

“Well, here we are at the top of the osiers ; and now, when you come down again, just lie off a bit, and tell the master—Harding, you say his name is—tell him to let you come up to the house, and tell me—say to anyone at the gates, the ‘Columbine’s’ lying off, and I’ll come off. I should like to see what the pup’s like. Good night, Miss Susan, and don’t you let him fall overboard again at night, or you’ll lose him.”

“No, sir,” said Susan, in a modest, quiet voice ; “and I thank you for getting him back, that I do, sir.”

Frank turned the bows into the bank, where, at this point, a willow-tree hung down towards the water. Catching one of the branches, he was soon up the muddy bank, and in a few minutes he was at the summer-house, and inside the park, and groping along the wall under the beeches for his coat and hat. Having found them,

he ran along over the grass homewards, feeling rather chilly after his night bath in the river; and as he ran, the dinner-bell rang.

As father and son sat over their wine, Mr. Morris said,

"Did any accident happen to you this evening after you came from London? Parkins has been telling me that he met you coming in by the back door with your hat and coat in your hand, and your dress from head to foot all mud and water-soaked."

"I was in the river—that was all, Dad. That stupid old Parkins, to make a story to you!"

"In the river! What the deuce were you doing in the river at that time, and with all your clothes on? It was as dark as a bag; and a fog, too."

"But I know the river just as well as I do my bedroom."

“ Come now, Frank, tell me. I see there is something. What is it?”

So Frank told his father in a few words. Mr. Morrice sat back in his chair with his eyes shut, and listened, with one foot on the fender in front of the fire. Frank had by this time arrived at an opinion that some might think what he had done was a folly, and that his father might be among the number. So he would have been silent about it till the boy came from the barge, if the old butler had not met him, and then taken the opportunity, while his father was dressing for dinner, to reveal to him Mr. Frank's condition. Frank broke the tale by saying he had gone, as usual, to give the fillies some apples. And then he went on to talk of men coming into the park off the water to pilfer in the dusky evenings, till he came to the cry of the pup as he stood leaning on the wall. As he related the affair in

a deprecatory manner, his father never moved a muscle of his face, till he came to the ditch, where he was obliged to swim; and then Mr. Morrice leaned forward and drained his glass of port. When the story was over, he sat up and looked his son steadily in the face.

"Well, Mr. Frank, if this is to be the kind of Quixotism you intend as a rule in life, I need not trouble myself to save up any money for you—I shall outlive you."

"I'm sure I hope so, Dad. I'd rather have you than your money any day. It was absurd, I daresay. At the same time, I shouldn't mind a small bet, that if you had been at my side at the wall, and had heard that poor little devil's cry, you'd have said, 'Frank, do you hear that? Hang it, man, it mustn't drown; you or I must go in.' Come now, Dad."

"Nonsense," said his father, as he poured

out another glass of port. That night, as he went to bed, Mr. Morrice said to his old servant, "Parkins, Mr. Frank is the finest fellow I know. He did to-night what not one young man in a hundred would have done."

CHAPTER III.

IT was a few days after the circumstances recorded in the last chapter that Frank was sitting in the saddle-room, talking to his father's old groom. This was a customary spot where he and the old man would sit and talk over the horses and other matters, and where Frank delighted to tease the old retainer. And, it must be said, the ancient retainer pleased himself in retorting, freely enough sometimes, on his young master. The Yorkshire groom had seen him grow up from a boy, and there was between them that recognised familiarity of the old servant and the young chief which is one of the binding ties of a family household.

Time and affection beget a habit of life, and the relative position of the master and the man is a contentment to both. Each wants the other, and a mutual want and a mutual regard prevent the want being a burden to either.

It was a foggy afternoon, rather similar to the former one. Frank had a cigar in his mouth.

"You didn't see a barge lying off anywhere, Dick—puff—did you, as you rode home along by the river?"

"Well, no, Mr. Frank, I didn't. It was so thick I couldn't see more than right athurt the water." Dick smoked a short pipe.

"It's very odd about that barge, the 'Columbine,'" said Frank. "She should have been down by this time."

"Jakers! 'tis jist a wonder you wasn't drowned out there in the dark—poof. We've got dogs enough without more; dare

say 'twas a cur—mostly is aboard the barges."

"I should like to see that pup," said Frank, as he thought over the affair, and remembered the small thing in his hands, "and the girl too. I wonder what they were like, those two?"

"It's my opinion," said Dick sententiously, "as the dog warn't worth the valley of sixpennorth o' baccy."

"Dick, you're an ass."

"There was my brother James—poof—I mind me as he said onst——"

"Dick—puff—your brother James was an ass."

"Well, Mr. Frank, if you says he is, then he is. There is asses, and my brother is one of 'em."

"Now, you're reasonable—puff—and I like reason."

"In coorse; and special when you used

to fall off your pony, and I picked ye up ;” and Dick looked steadily into the fire, in an aggravating way.

“’Pon my soul, I like that ! Why, you can’t sit on your own saddle now sometimes without my holding you on.” (The old man had one fault—now and then he got tipsy.) “Mungo here can tell you a story about that.”

“There’s grateful people, and there’s on-grateful people, there is. You’ll get a bad fall some day, Mr. Frank, and then you’ll mind ye of my words.”

“I’ll just ask Mungo.” Frank rose gravely from his seat by the fire, walked to the door leading into the stable, opened it, and holding it in his hand, called out, “Mungo, here’s Dick says I didn’t hold him on your back that night from the gallop over the Harrow country. What do you say ?” Then he shut the door after a

minute, and came back to his seat ; and puffing his cigar, he said, "There, you heard?"

"I heerd him. He said, as plain as horse could say it, 'Dick,' says he, 'he had a cup o' milk at the "Three Crowns" that day as Mr. Frank was throwed out in the run to Pinner.'"

"Milk !" exclaimed Frank. "Now, Dick!"

"You see, sir, when I was a babby, my mother was obligated to wean me early, because the milk was so terrible bad on my stummick—got in my head always—so it did that day—if anybody put a taste of anything in it, then—."

Just at that moment one of the hinds was heard asking in the yard if any one had seen Mr. Frank.

"Here I am. What is it?"

"If you please, sir, there's a mort o' men down the park. I was going down to the

Wilderness to look arter two sheep as I missed, when there I see 'em—ever such a lot."

"How many—five or six?"

"Ay, sir, more, I do reckon, down by the walnuts at the bottom corner."

"Good!" said Frank. "Here, Dick, put a snaffle in the old pony's mouth; I'll ride him in his cloth. Bring him round to the sweep, and I'll get my gun and be down there to meet you in five minutes. I'll give these fellows a tickling," he continued to himself as he ran into the house. "The tread-mill for seven days does them no good whatever—they come out, and are as great pilferers as ever."

By the time Frank had got his gun the pony was at the door by the portico. Vaulting on his back, he told Dick to send two or three of the gardeners and stablemen down into the park with sticks, and he would

go round behind the pilferers by the Wilderness, and come down on them and cut off their retreat, and then they might capture one or two of them. "In the mist they won't see you till you're close on them." And away he went at a canter.

"That's a rare un," said Dick, meditatively, as he walked back to the yard. "Makes us all do just as he likes—father and all. There's Mistress Parkins, now, she's a proud un, but she'd jest lick the dust off his shoes, she would; and it's my belief as there'll be a game about that 'Columbine' girl and her dog, if he can find her. Now he'll go and have a game with those men in the park; tickle 'em—ah! I dare say, tickle—if they don't look sharp and hear the old pony a-coming, they'll smart—that's what'll happen, I warrant."

As Dick went to do what Frank had told him, that young gentleman was making his

way to the scene of action. The ground sloped away to the river-side, so he pushed along the low ground by the arbeles, and then passed out into the park, through the small gate near the Dutch summer-house. All this western side of the park was hidden by unequal ground from the eastern side, where the pilferers were; and, besides this, the mist lay heavily all over the hilly slopes. So he galloped down under the beech-grove, and along the high causeway by the lake, and so into the Wilderness. By the time he had made his way through this to where it opened on the extreme end of the park, he had made the old pony glad of a check. Now here were some deep sandy dells, with steep sides, and fir-trees on the brink; and here he stopped to breathe his pony, and to give Dick and the men time to get well on their way. While he pulled up under the brink of the last of these sand-

hills, he loaded his gun with some shot, a little more than dust-shot. "Just tickle them if I get near enough," he said; "frighten the scamps, anyhow."

Taking his gun, cocked and ready, in his right hand, and gathering the reins up short in his left, he put the pony up the bank, and came out on the open ground. He had about three hundred yards to gallop to the trees, and the space from the trees to the corner of the wall where it turned was about another hundred. All that corner was formed into a considerable mound or sand-hill, with fir-trees on it, so that on the inside the park wall was only four feet high on the slope of the mound, while on the outside, the drop into a road and some fields, it was ten feet. A man could run up the sloping mound from the park and throw himself over the four-foot wall with ease.

By some chance the mist at this corner of

the park was less thick, so that by the time Frank had ridden a hundred yards of the distance he came in sight of the pilferers, some seven or eight men. They were under a couple of walnut-trees, which stood out in a rather isolated position, away from any wall, throwing sticks into them, and putting the fallen fruit into bags. Some of these were already full, and ready for carrying off. The men were so intent on their work that they did not keep much watch, and when any man did look up to see if anyone was coming, he only looked up the park towards the house. No one suspected an enemy on the flank or rear. Thus Frank rode on in a direction to cut them off from the mound, at a steady canter, till within a hundred yards of them, and then he shouted. The men caught sight of him in a moment. Those who were at the tree nearest to the wall started for the mound and the corner.

The others struck off over the park for the beech-tree causeway, and the low wall. Taking one look up the park in the direction of the house, Frank could just distinguish three or four men running and shouting. "All right," he said to himself, "our people giving chase; but those fellows off the river have rare wind. They'll beat Dick and the others over the open. What lies they will tell if they don't catch any!"

Meanwhile the pony was cutting off the men going for the mound, three in number. Frank shouted to them to stop as they neared the mound, but to no purpose; they held on stoutly, dropped their bags of fruit to run lighter, and all three arrived in a ruck at the sand-hill. Frank, seeing that they meant going, pulled up the pony at about forty yards from them, and sent one barrel at them. They dashed up the slope, made a rush at the wall, and leaped on it, all three

together, and as they hustled over the top Frank pulled the other trigger, and they all dropped out of sight in an instant into the road. Galloping to the top of the mound, he looked out over the wall ; there the men were, still going at the same pace along a field-path, going as if the enemy were still in chase. So he gave them one or two parting "Halloa's," just to maintain the wholesome state of alarm, and then, turning round, put the pony's head on the line of the others.

"How very superior this is to the treadmill," Frank thought to himself, as he galloped along.

When Frank had reached about midway over the park, he came on old Dick, very much blown, and reduced to a walk.

"Dick," he exclaimed, as he came up, "you wretched old scamp!—how many men have you caught?"

"Ah, if I were atop o' the old pony, I'd go along too. I never was a good un at running, and riding don't make me lissomer," muttered the old man. "Howsever," said Dick, as he hobbled along with the aid of his stick, "I hollered—that I did—I hollered to 'em to stop, till my breath was gone—but, Jakers, a man might as lief holler to that old carrion as is a-croaking up there, as to they river chaps."

Frank rode on, and came up to the others in pursuit, just as they reached the beech trees and the low wall in a scattered array, the prey escaped.

"Anybody caught?" shouted Frank.

"No, sir," said the first man he overtook, a gardener, armed with a very appropriate weapon of offence, a spade, "they runned clear away from us—we hadn't a chance."

"They had the start of we, d'ye see, sir," said the hind, now joining them; "they

seed you and the horse, and they was off like nails."

"Of course," said Frank, "you fellows are so full of beef and beer—why, those men would give you a start of a hundred yards in a hundred and fifty, and lick you by chalks then."

"No, no, sir, not that; you be hard on we, Mr. Frank, you be indeed—they had the start—if we'd only been alongside of 'em and had a chance, lor, we'd a-had the whole lot of 'em, easy."

"Carried two apiece—one under each arm—of course," said Frank, gravely.

"It don't matter a brass farden what we did," said Dick, coming up, "because Mr. Frank, he's been and brought one of 'em down with his gun—whereabouts shall we find him, sir?"

"Now, Dick, you go and look for him. You'll find him in the corner of the mound

with his heels up against the wall, waiting for you—mind he doesn't slip through your fingers and get away."

"All right, sir, I'll find him; if he's dead, what shall we do with the body, Mr. Frank?"

"Now, you Dick, don't talk, but take the pony—I'm going on down the Wilderness," and with that he turned away and left the would-be thief-takers, and walked towards the lake. Stopping a few yards off, he called back, "Those fellows dropped a bag or two with their walnuts—look for them, and carry them up to the house."

CHAPTER IV.

FRANK walked along under the beech-trees on the causeway by the lake, without any very definite idea of why he was doing so. Of course the men that had been pursued over the park were quite out of reach by this time. Some of them might have gone up the river-side by a narrow strip of rough ground, which lay between a line of iron railing under the arbores and the water, and so round the point of the boundary-wall, as it abutted on the river by the Italian pavilion. At low tide this was easy enough, though at high tide the water flowed over the strip and through the railing into the grounds. Others might have

gone down the bank by a creek, or even be lying concealed in the osier-bed, and in the growing darkness they were safe. Anyhow, they were all beyond capture. Still, he sauntered on, and reaching the end of the causeway, he stopped by a ruined little building, once a keeper's lodge, now dismantled. There was a large gateway here, which connected the building with the causeway wall. There was an arch turned over the gateway of brick, and this and the ruin of the keeper's lodge formed a picturesque termination of the beech-tree causeway.

Frank stood by the gateway listening, and doubting if he should go through it, and out to the river bank. Hearing nothing and seeing nothing, he turned homewards. But as he went, looking carelessly over the low wall, he suddenly was aware of a light on the river. It was not there one minute

before. He involuntarily stopped and watched it. It was stationary, and, as far as he could judge, it must be at about the middle of the stream. In the mist and the darkness it was but a hazy light—a light on a barge, Frank thought to himself, at anchor out there. It was a common circumstance enough, for hardly a night passed, in the long autumn or winter hours, without his seeing a light up-stream or down on some barge. But the events of the last few days had made him more alive to matters connected with the river than was usual with him. So he turned back again on his walk.

When he came to the ruin and the gateway, he stood and watched the light. He thought it must be a lantern tied up in the rigging; and that in a night such as this was going to be, dark and foggy, it was only safe to have a light to prevent accidents, as

a warning to boats and other barges. The 'Columbine' having been often in his thoughts lately, he muttered, half aloud—"Suppose it were the 'Columbine'—but what nonsense! If she had stopped anywhere off here, the boy would have come up, and she would have put her anchor down off the house, not down there, nearly a mile off."

By this time, however, his curiosity was excited; and so, with an intention half formed in his mind of hailing the barge and asking her name, he tried to open the gate. It was chained and locked, being but rarely used, so he swung himself down over the wall. On the outside there was here an open space or shelf of grass, dividing two broad osier-beds. The creek ran up from the river on one side, and nearly touched the beech causeway wall, a short spur projecting to meet it. Between the causeway and the water the distance was about eighty

yards. A little way off the shelf of grass on its other side, and about half-way to the water, there rose a low grassy hill, and on this was a clump of fir-trees. Standing on this, he could look over the osiers, which touched its foot on two sides towards the stream, and was about opposite the barge and the light.

Frank was on the point of hailing the barge, when suddenly he heard men's voices and could distinguish the brush of the osier rods as they were pushed aside by people passing through them. Frank drew himself behind one of the fir-trees, where it was pitch dark. The men emerged from the osier-bed on the edge of the hill, and passing along its front, stopped immediately below Frank, at the brink of the shrubs. There were three men.

"Barge—ahoy!" shouted one of the men. Presently a shrill cry in response came across the water.

“ ‘Queen o’ Brentford ’—ahoy !” sung out the man again.

“ ‘Queen o’ Brentford,’ ” said one of the others, “ what do ye give the craft that nickname for ? ”

“ Coz she likes it.”

“ Likes it ? Who likes it ? ”

“ May be the craft likes it ; the old hulk gets a pretty many names atwixt Southark and this. Ain’t ‘Queen o’ Brentford ’ as good as ‘Columbine ’ any day ? ”

“ Here comes the boat,” said another. “ I hears un.”

“ Bless’d if I don’t sting all over my back like nettles,” said the man who had hailed the barge.

“ You was the hindermost, d’ye see, and so had it hot. I were jest afore you at the corner, and I never got nothin’ at the first go.”

“ Darn him, I say ! But you had it at the second on the wall, I know.”

"That I did, jest about," said the second speaker ; "blowed if the back o' my 'ead don't reg'lar burn—it do. How was it, Jim, you never got none?"

"I spose I were a bit wide o' you two," replied the third man, "or else I had the devil's luck ; but I'm a thinking I got one in my right leg. I didn't heed it at first, but now it jest feels as though somebody had the point of his knife in it."

"Darn him, I say!" repeated the first speaker. "And then to come round on us so tarnation deep, and a-horseback too, and a gun ; and me a-looking up the park now and again, and never to think of his coming that dodge over we. If ever I have a chance, I'll pay him off for this turn, darned if I don't!"

"You put salt on his tail," said the third man. "I'd give that chap a wide berth if I was in your shoes."

"No, I wun't, bless'd if I do! I'll pay him out one day, see if I don't."

"That's the first time," observed the second man, "as I seed sich a go as that, and I shan't like the sound of a gun again, not for a bit. My 'ead, how it do burn! Tell ye what, mate, when we get home you must have a turn at it with your knife, for 'tis my belief there's some of they shots got under the bark."

"Here comes the boat," said one, and they all pushed through the osiers, and in a few minutes Frank heard them get into the boat and push off.

"That's neat," said Frank to himself; "three wounded birds—very pretty shooting. So that is the 'Columbine,' after all. What a strange coincidence! No wonder that no one came up to tell me of her being off here, when the Commodore was planning a little foray upon our trees. And then

by the merest chance in the world I come down on him and put a few shot into his back. By the way, I wonder whether that man, or either of them, is the Commodore ; his voice sounded like that of a young man, not of one old enough to be Susan's father. Well, I should be sorry indeed if her father was the kind of person to come ashore to rob orchards and parks, with a lot of other river-side scamps : that would be a pity if he were to keep such company as that ;" and so Frank sauntered home, lost in conjecture as to the "Columbine."

As he approached the house, another question arose in his mind—Should he tell his father all that had happened ? He felt a strange disinclination to connect the "Columbine" and Susan and her dog with this discreditable affair of plundering his father's trees, and in such a thoroughly premeditated way, bags being carried expressly for the plunder.

Somehow the idea of Susan had taken a pleasant place in his mind—occupied a smiling corner. There was a small adventure connected with her, and a curiosity to see her; and now came this dark cloud over it all—a father who was a swearing fellow and a petty robber; and then he had shot this man, who had vowed a revenge deliberately and repeatedly. Should he tell all this to his father? As the agent of evil pressed concealment upon him, with many small devices, such as “save your father from trouble, and yourself from ridicule over your swim for the pup,” Frank pondered for a time. Then he said to himself, “No, no, dear old Dad. I’ve never kept anything yet from you, and I shan’t begin now.”

That being settled, Frank went round by the stable-yard, to inquire for the bags left by the flying men as they ran for the mound. In the yard he found Dick, holding forth to

two or three of the gardeners and stablemen. The whole thing had ruffled Frank. He was vexed, disappointed, ill at ease with himself.

"Dick," said he, "where are those bags I told you of? did you find them?"

"Yes, sir, here they are—three of 'em—all full of walnuts; we brought them up as they was."

"Good; now bring them into the house, and let them be put in the hall. I want my father to see them."

Dick sidled up to him, and without looking him in the face, said in a low tone, "There's the name 'Columbine' marked on two of 'em."

"Bring them all in. I know all about it; now don't bother."

Dick instinctively felt how it all was—held his tongue, and followed silently with the bags.

Frank was thoughtful about his father. Why should he spoil his dinner by an unpleasant story just before it?—for he knew it would be unpleasant; so he reserved it till afterwards.

Over their wine he began—

“I am afraid, Dad, I have a story for you which will vex you.”

“About yourself, Frank?”

“About myself.”

“Mind, Frank, I thank you beforehand for telling it to me, whatever it is, only let me have it all.”

“You shall have it all.” The fine tact and the delicate generosity of thanking him beforehand made Frank rather ashamed of his having doubted for a moment about telling his father. So he told his story without a reserve. When he had done, to Frank’s pleased surprise, the first words his father uttered were—“Serve the scamps right if

you did sting them." Then he went on—
"It was only a few days ago that I was talking over this very thing with one of our neighbours here, Mr. Lawson, who is a magistrate ; and he was lamenting that there is no sufficient punishment for those petty thieves. But I am sorry you shot them, nevertheless—though they deserved what they got—partly because it is a little irregular, and if the men had been seriously hurt, it might be awkward ; and next, because it may bring a trouble on you. I don't like that threat of revenge, so repeated."

"I don't care a fig for that," said Frank.
"Those fellows, as a rule, are arrant cowards, and they will threaten much before they do anything."

"I quite agree in the last opinion ; and threatened men live long, as the adage has it. Still, I wish it had not happened."

"Do you think either of them—and

especially the threatener—can be the captain of the barge—Harding?”

“No,” said Mr. Morrice, “that is one thing I do not think. You say his voice sounded like that of a young man; and, besides, people like Wilcox and Co., of Southwark, would certainly not be likely to employ as captain of one of their barges, carrying much property in goods and money backwards and forwards, a man of such a character. This may be some young man in their employ on board. The other two may be the same.”

“But the bags with the name on them. Dick says there’s the name ‘Columbine’ on two.”

“Very likely. These men must have gone from the barge intending this bit of pilfering, without the captain knowing what they were going about, and have taken the bags secretly. If they had carried off the

bags with the walnuts, of course they would have sold them somewhere—at Mortlake or Barnes."

Frank was exceedingly comforted with this opinion of his father as to these men's connexion with the "Columbine"—that neither of them could be Harding. And so he went to bed that night in a serene frame of mind. The cloud was dispersing that had seemed likely to settle on the smiling corner of his thoughts which contained Susan.

Mr. Morrice went to bed not quite so serenely-minded. He was pondering over Frank's impulses, and he shook his head as he called to mind the opinion he had formed—that these impulses would lead him into scrapes, and he would have to get out of them as well as he could. "Anyhow, he comes to me in his trouble," was his father's consolation as he put his head on his pillow.

CHAPTER V.

SIR CHARLES and Lady Underside had a London house and a country house. The former was in Berkeley Square, and the latter was in Hertfordshire; and with this latter was a good estate. Moreover, Sir Charles had a considerable sum in Consols. They had no son, but two daughters. The land and money were in the absolute power of Sir Charles; and it was said about town that he would give the land to his eldest daughter, and his money to the younger. Sir Charles was a cousin of Mr. Morrice of The Wick; and the natural consequence of this was that Frank Morrice was often in Berkeley Square. The Undersides

were what is called solid people—that is, sensible, unassuming, keeping a good establishment, paying their bills, living well, hospitable, cordial, friendly, in good society in London, highly respected in their county. The two daughters were pleasant and good-looking girls, not beauties—well-bred in appearance and in manners; and the younger, just twenty years of age, was believed by some keen discerners to have a lurking liking for Frank Morrice. Of course the keen discerners said, “Anna Underside will have the money, and Frank will marry her.”

It was a day or two after the events at The Wick just recorded that the Undersides were in Berkeley Square for a week or two, on their way from Germany into Hertfordshire. Sir Charles and My Lady thus conversed *tête-à-tête* in the library.

Said Sir Charles, “I should be very glad to see Frank Morrice carry off our second

girl. I like him, and he knows all my ways, and he is a good fellow; besides, he will have his father's property, which is respectable. With our money they would be comfortable.

"I rather doubt Frank's marrying yet," said My Lady. "His father mopes down at The Wick, and Frank is getting into his ways—stays at home, and does not care much for society."

"You know he is understood to be reading law—perhaps he keeps up this at home."

"None but poor men ever read law," said Lady Underside. "So I have always heard; and Frank need never open a book. He showed, when at Oxford, that he can do whatever he sets his mind to do; but, in fact, his father indulges him, and so he is idle."

"Morrice has never quite got over that loss of his wife—a charming woman. I re-

member her well as Betsy Wharton—the sweet songstress, she was called—a pretty creature, and full of happy ideas. Frank is like her in the face, and that is one reason why Morrice is so wrapped up in him. It is but natural that he should grow up with his father's habits, for he has always made his home a refined and a happy one to him. I don't believe there is anything Morrice really denies him, and he is devoted to his father."

"That's the difficulty of his marrying," said Lady Underside. "His home is so thoroughly happy to him, and so independent. Those young independent men are so difficult to marry—unless they are thrown much with some nice girl quite early. Here is Frank five and twenty. Besides, he has been hearing some odd ideas from his father about marrying. I wish Mr. Morrice would not inoculate Frank with his notions."

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"Ah! I remember," said Sir Charles; "Morrice always had some curious ideas."

"Do you recollect, the last time he was here last season, his saying something about being strong enough without marrying, when some people were talking of marriage? It was an odd expression."

"Ah! that's Morrice. That's the way he used to talk. He used to say that a man's life was art, not nature; that when a man is weak by art he lives by art, and when he is strong by art he lives by nature—or some such thing. He always was fond of saying curious things."

"What did he mean?" said Lady Under-
side.

"You must ask him yourself some day," replied Sir Charles. "Suppose we all go down to The Wick before we go into Hertfordshire, and see him, and then you can have a talk with him about this."

"I daresay I shall not half understand him," said Lady Underside. "I'm afraid he gets worse the older he grows. Hark! There's Frank's voice in the hall, I do think. How can he have known of our being here?"

"Anyhow, he's just in time for luncheon," said Sir Charles.

Lady Underside muttered to herself, as she followed him to the dining-room, "When a man is strong by art he lives by nature. He can't mean that he is strong enough to live without marrying; that seems to be an abominable doctrine. I'll make him explain it to me."

"My dear Frank, I'm charmed to see you; and how's your father? How did you know we were here?"

"Well, my lady, I heard it in this wise. Your lady'smaid is a sworn ally of our cook, and she wrote yesterday to say the family

were arrived ; and this morning Mrs. Parkins imparted to me that important piece of information."

"Very good of you to come so soon to see us," said Sir Charles. "And your father is well? Delighted to hear it. Always at The Wick?"

"Always; we never leave it for long at a time, my father is so fond of it."

"What in the world can you find to do there?" said Marion; "it must be frightfully dull, now that London is empty."

"It is quite true; we have been having the most delightfully suicidal weather down there lately. I have been trying to drown myself in the river for the last week, but I failed horribly; Lion and Duchess wouldn't let me—bit me horribly in pulling me out."

"How absurd you are!—but what do you do with yourself there?"

"My entire time is filled up, when I am

not buried deep down in a sepulchre of low spirits, in feeding four two-year-old fillies with apples and carrots, and teaching them manners ; in conversing with Dick, our old groom, and generally enlarging my mind."

"I suppose you see your father sometimes," said Anna, laughing.

"Yes, we meet at what Dick calls meals ; Parkins leads the conversation, generally on high art."

"You've got rid of your low spirits, anyhow, for to-day," said Marion ; "I shall put that down to your pleasure at seeing us."

"That's the entire truth, Marion, upon my honour."

"Now, Frank, do be serious for a minute," said Lady Underside. "Are you and your father at home to-morrow ? If so, Sir Charles and I and the girls will all come down and have luncheon with you."

"My father will be delighted to see you

all, I am quite certain ; and while you and Sir Charles and my father are discussing mighty questions, Marion and Anna and I will go and feed my pets with apples. I pronounce beforehand that they will both decide that Empress and Liz are two perfectly and entirely lovely creatures. Liz I flirt with. Empress I love seriously. You won't believe it of me, but I have nearly composed two lines on her ; the only difficulty is, I cannot get a rhyme quite to my mind for—unapproachable.”

Of course the two girls received this nonsense with gaiety. Anna said she would be sure to bring down some apples on purpose for his love, while Marion promised him a rhyme which she would answer for it would meet with his entire contentment.

After they had all joined in some general talk about Germany and their German trip,

“I must say good-bye for to-day,” said

Sir Charles, rising, "I must get into the city on some business."

"I am going your way," said Frank, "so I will say adieu to these ladies till to-morrow." And the two gentlemen departed. Sir Charles set Frank down at Temple Bar on his way into the city.

Frank had left home that morning with one idea in his mind very defined—to call in Berkeley Square; and with another rather undefined—to go to Southwark. Two days had passed since the affair in the park, and he had been chafing under the uncertainty of knowing what was the position on the "Columbine" of the man he had shot. After what his father had said of uneasiness as to the man's threats of violence to himself, he had not ventured to propose that he should go to Southwark. His father would naturally have objected to such a proceeding, as only invoking trouble.

He would have said, Why go there?—for what purpose? But the fancy of Frank was concerned, that of his father was not. Frank had gone through, it might be said, fire and water in this matter—water in the affair of Susan and the pup; fire in that of shooting the man of the barge. So the “Columbine” question concerned him—his father was only an outsider in it. So he chafed under the uncertainty—as to the man, and as to Susan.

Now when he heard of the Underside family having arrived in London, Frank at once proposed to go and see them, with the latent thought of a visit to Southwark besides.

On leaving Sir Charles at Temple Bar, Frank went through the Temple Courts, and so to the Temple stairs. Finding a boat there, he told the boatman to pull him down to Southwark.

“Do you happen to know Wilcox’s warehouses on the river?—they keep barges.”

“Works up stream,” said the man.

“Yes; to Brentford, and Hampton, and so on,” said Frank.

“I knows ’em.” There is no more laconic being breathing than a boatman when he is sculling.

“I want to find a barge called the ‘Columbine,’” said Frank.

“Belongs to Wilcox?” said the boatman.

“I believe so—anyhow she works for him,” said Frank.

“Spose as she ain’t a-laying off the wharf?” said the man interrogatively.

“Then I must make inquiry as to where she is.”

The tide was at the full—just at the top—part of the water was running up, and part had turned, and it was running down

at the side. The river was thickly covered with craft of every kind and size. Frank calculated that the "Columbine," having only lately come down, would not be loading yet for a fresh voyage, and would therefore be lying in the stream off Wilcox's wharf. Still he could not help watching and examining every barge as it went by, and reading all the names he could see. They passed through Blackfriars Bridge, and then they came to Southwark. They had scarcely shot it in the sweeping tide, when the boatman nodded his head over his left shoulder, "There's Wilcox's." It was a high large building, with the name painted in broad letters on a board high up on its front.

"Pull over to it," said Frank; and in a few minutes they were lying off it, the boatman backing water to keep the boat steady in the now rapidly falling tideway. A number of barges were moored out in the river, and

these were all having their mooring ropes and chains altered and arranged to meet the altered stream. How they creaked and groaned as the huge unwieldy hulks swung about, and swayed and bumped against each other, according as they felt the different pressure of the water. It was impossible for any one out in the stream to see the names of the barges lying inside by the wharf.

Some of the owners of warehouses are not content with a wharf on the bank, and so they have an inner basin behind. A waterway or canal is cut from the river, at right angles to it, through the wharf; and the warehouse is built over this, with a long arch turned over the canal; with water-gates outside, a barge can be let in at high water, the gates shut, the barge loaded at leisure through trap doors in the arch, and the vessel floated out again at high water. When the barge is in the canal the stern end of it

projects beyond the building out into the basin ; or even the whole vessel may lie out clear of the warehouse, and high and even with the wharf yard.

So now Frank inquired for the "Columbine," and was told she was inside the gates taking in a fresh cargo. Telling the boatman to lie by till his return, he jumped up on the outer barge ; and then crossing two or three more, all lying wedged together, he reached the wharf. Accidentally he stopped a minute to examine the iron gates and the entrance of the canal, high and arched. The wharf was a large open level space, the warehouse on one hand running all along its boundary. Beyond it, on the other hand, were the backs of sheds of another barge-owner and merchant. At its extremity were Wilcox's sheds, where goods were brought from the street behind and unloaded. There was a small office in front of these. As

Frank walked up the wharf, a well-dressed, rather young man came out of the office, and seeing Frank looking about, asked him if he had any business with Mr. Wilcox. Frank replied that he had no particular business with Mr. Wilcox, but that he lived on the Thames, and knew of the barges of the firm constantly passing up and down, and that he had a wish to see one of their warehouses, and had admired the gates of the canal as he came by them. At the same time he apologised for what might seem like a liberty. Frank carried in his appearance and manner so thoroughly the bearing of a gentleman that this excuse passed muster; and the young man, announcing himself as Mr. Charles Wilcox, very courteously offered at once to show him over the large warehouse in front. Frank at once accepted this obliging proposal, and was soon in full talk with the courteous partner on the subject of the

canal. Calling to a clerk to tell him where he was to be found if wanted, Mr. Charles led Frank up some stairs into the large building.

On reaching the top of the stair, Frank found himself in an immense room or gallery, rather narrow, and reaching from end to end of the building. This was divided from other similar galleries by walls of strong boarding, pierced by wide doors at intervals. Some of these were nearly empty, the goods having been disposed of, while others were heavily occupied with piles on piles of cases, and bales on bales, while men were among them, busy in moving them from place to place. From this floor they mounted to another, and so to a third, all similarly arranged; and everywhere the same busy scene of occupied men, and the wealth of varied merchandise. Wilcox was what is termed a general merchant. Frank had

made good his footing in the opinion of the partner by using incidentally one or two names high in the mercantile world, with whom his father was acquainted. So he was quite at his ease, and in the intervals of asking questions and venturing remarks on the various foreign productions explained to him by the courteous Mr. Charles, Frank had time to con over to himself what his conduct should be as to the "Columbine." There was one thing quite distinct to him, that he did not know by sight any one of the people on board her, and no one there knew him. So he would preserve his incog., and learn what he could.

All the upper floors of the warehouse being gone through, his companion brought Frank down to the part of the floor just over the canal. Here were various large doors or openings in the flooring, and here the goods, bales or cases, were being let

down by pulleys and windlass into the barge beneath. Men were loading the "Columbine." At either extremity of the long gallery over the canal was a large doorway. The stern of the "Columbine" had passed in first, and the bows were towards the entrance gates. Of course at the stern of these barges is the small living place for the barge-master's family, handy to the steerage. In some barges the domicile or cabin is roofed in up to the extreme stern, and then the rudder bar projects over the roof. In others there is a small open space left, of about eight feet or so, between the cabin and the stern; and there is a flight of steps from the shelf or ledge of the barge side down into the space, into which a door and window open. This latter is the more comfortable arrangement, as in this case here is a safe place for the children of the barge-master, and a shelter for the wife on cold and windy

days. This is her parlour. Often had Frank seen the women and children, when barges were lying off The Wick, seated on the roof at work, or at play down in the sheltered little parlour or court, their caps now and then just appearing over the barge side. Technically this court was the stern sheets.

Now as Frank stood in the large doorway of the warehouse, where the stern of the "Columbine" was projecting into the basin behind, he was just over the cabin. There was the small court with the flight of steps down into it, and the door and window opening on it. These latter he could not see, as they were turned away from him. But there was the little dwelling with the low arched roof, and the small iron chimney with the smoke issuing from it. The front of the cabin was painted green, the rudder post and bar were pink. Some of these barges affect ornament and smartness. As Frank

stood looking down on the cabin, there was a stout middle-aged man, a portly, handsome figure, with a bronzed face, and blue open eyes, dressed roughly with a pea-jacket for warmth over his other clothing, sitting on a chair on the roof. He was smoking, and apparently watching the loading of the barge. Seeing the partner standing in the doorway above him, he said, "Be pleased not to load her heavy in the bow, Mr. Charles; she likes her weight in her waist."

"Yes, yes, I'll take care," replied the partner. "The bales in front, and the cases behind."

"All right, sir," said the man. Then he stamped with one foot on the roof, and cried out, "Suz, bring me some baccer, my pipe's a-getting low," and he gave a sharp puff or two, and then knocked the pipe against the chair he was sitting on, to shake out the

ashes. A girl came out of the door into the little court, and tripped up the steps with a tin case and a match-box in her hand.

“Here it is, father.”

“That’s a lass ; allays ready. Where’s the pup ?”

“Down below, father.”

“Mind, don’t you be bringing him up here away till we be out again, or he’ll be on the wharf and away.”

“No, he shan’t come up.”

Puff—puff, the man went on smoking. The girl was about sixteen, or she might be seventeen, with a fair fresh face, a little tanned by the barge and river life, with deep blue eyes, delicate features, light brown hair, simply knotted up behind, and a slight figure, rather short than tall. There was nothing remarkable about her except a certain neatness or trimness of face and figure—a kind of young person one sees without

especially noticing her. She wore a blue cotton dress, with white spots on it. A small Scotch red and black kerchief was pinned up close round under her chin. The first thought in Frank's mind was, she's older than I expected from her voice that night. The next was, it is a comfort I did not have that cold swim for an ugly girl and her dog.

Susan stood by the man for a minute before going down again to the court. There were various men standing about on the wharf, porters and others, moving cases, and crates, and bales, which were lying about here and there. The girl threw her eyes round over them, and then, not seeing anything to call her particular attention, she was going down the steps, when Frank could not help that involuntary cough which will somehow always come on such occasions. So he coughed. The girl looked up, and

seeing the two men standing in the doorway above her, she let her eyes rest on them for a moment. The partner gave her a nod. "Good day, Susan." The girl smiled, gave a little nod in return, went down the steps, and was going into the door, when a small pup ran up to her and barked for attention. She stooped down to talk to it.

"I suppose you know all the people you employ," said Frank to his companion.

"Well, yes, some more, some less." Then, in a low voice—"Harding is a real good man—most respectable—one of our best on the river. That's his daughter."

"You must employ a great number of barges, I should expect, to look at your warehouses," said Frank.

"Some of the barges are our own," said the partner, "and some are not, but are owned by men we can trust, and who work

them at regular rates. This is one of our own."

As Frank spoke out loud, the girl suddenly looked up from her stooping posture, and gazed steadily at Frank for an instant, and then went on caressing the pup.

"Where's your farthest point up-stream?" said Frank. "I suppose you go through the Twickenham Lock?"

"Ay, a long way beyond that—Staines—Windsor—higher still."

"I think I must have seen the 'Columbine' come up," said Frank, "past Kew."

"Very likely; she's often up above there."

Again the girl looked up at the speakers for a moment, then went into the door, and stood behind it listening. Just at that moment a tall, slashing young fellow came out from under the arch on the cabin roof, and turning his face up towards the partner, said,

"There be a bale or two, sir, for Brentford—whereabouts be they to be stowed?"

"All bales in the front," said the partner.

"Yes, all bales in front," echoed Harding. "I telled ye so, Tom, afore."

The two young men looked at each other, but, of course, without any mutual recognition. But Frank in an instant knew the voice—the voice of the man who stood by the fir-trees that evening, and who said he would be revenged on Frank for shooting him in the park. Now, when the young fellow came on the cabin roof and spoke, the girl suddenly hurried out of the door again, with a frightened look in her face. She seemed as if she was going to speak to the young man, Tom ; but then, changing her mind, she stooped down again to the pup. When Tom was gone, Frank said, in a low voice to his companion—

"Is that young man a son of Harding?"

"Oh! no," replied the other, in the same tone. "I believe he's some cousin or something. He's a scampish young fellow, and we don't like him; but on account of Harding, we let him go with the barge."

Frank had learned all he desired to know, and so now he expressed his obligation to the partner for all his courtesy, and prepared to depart. But just as he was going away from the door, the pup escaped from the caressing hands of Susan in the court below, and ran barking across the little place. It was a small brown brindled terrier. So Frank said aloud,

"That's a pretty pup of yours, Mr. Harding."

"Ay, sir, he comes of a good sort," replied Harding.

"He's not a water-dog, though he lives on the water," said Frank. "You must teach him to swim, Miss Susan."

The girl made no reply, but Harding said, with a laugh—

“Ay, that’s what I tell her ; he’s been overboard more nor once a’ready, and some day he’ll get drowned, if she don’t take care.”

Frank and Mr. Charles walked away ; and as Frank went over the river, he thought over the visit to the wharf. “Susan soon found me out,” he said to himself, “by my voice, as I did that fellow Tom. How frightened she looked when he came up and spoke to the partner ! Of course he never can have told her anything of what happened in the park—that is impossible—but I’ll be bound he has been saying some rough things of The Wick, which have shown her that he is angry about something connected with me. Anyhow, I’m glad he is not her brother.”

CHAPTER VI.

THAT evening Frank related to his father the events of the day—his visit to the Undersides, and their proposal to come on the morrow to The Wick—of which Mr. Morrice heard with a mild complacency—and then his boating trip to Wilcox's yard.

“I'm glad that fellow did not recognise you ; and now you had better let the matter drop. In a little time it will be probably all forgotten—at least, I hope so. You see, it is as I surmised ; he was not the girl's father—a different sort of man.”

Frank let the subject drop.

The next day the Underside party arrived. Mr. Morrice had no very strong liking or

caring for Sir Charles ; but he had a kindly feeling for his wife, and almost an affection for the daughters. He had known them as children.

After luncheon, which was more than good, and during which the conversation was pleasant, the girls having much to say about the excursion into Germany, they reminded Frank of his promise to show them his pets. Anna produced her promised apples in a basket.

“Pippins?” said Frank. “I hope they are pippins. I forgot to say this yesterday. Empress is weak upon her fruit. Liz is a greedy little thing, and will eat anything, even russets and hall-doors. But my love loves her love with a P, because she has her partialities and her preferences, and she pronounces that Paradise produced pippins—that is, she would if she could.”

Anna exclaimed that they were pippins.

How fortunate ! And so they went off very happy. Lady Underside proclaimed herself not equal to much walking ; her continental trip had fatigued her, mind and body, and she would rest ; she would stay with Mr. Morrice. Of course Sir Charles stayed ; he did not care for colts.

“ Now,” said Frank, as they started over the lawn and by the Dutch flower-garden and the orange walk, “ you shall see how my young ladies behave. They are a happy mixture of rebellion and obedience—just like all your sex.”

“ Thank you,” said Marion.

“ Now, Anna, isn’t it true ? Marion and I always quarrel, and I do hope we always shall ; it keeps us both fresh for work. Isn’t it true ?”

“ Yes, it is true,” said Anna. “ I know, at all events, that’s me ; I like rebellion—it’s so pleasant and inspiring. And I like obe-

dience ; well, I think I do—sometimes.”

“I declare there’s Lady Ann just like you. She is never quite sure if she’ll kick or not. And Empress is like Marion in one way—she’s altogether an imposing creature ; but then she does not quarrel with me—there she’s different.”

“Frank, I am not the least imposing.”

Frank stood still, and gave a long, shrill whistle.

“Hark !” he said ; “in a minute you’ll hear them. I have had them all put in a paddock by themselves, because the other horses, loose in the park, bother them. In a minute you’ll hear them call me.”

“They can’t see you,” said Marion. They were standing under some yew trees, thick and bushy, and which shut them in by the sunk fence. He repeated his whistle.

“My young ladies come to my call—very obedient in that.” Just then the musical

neigh of a young horse was heard, sounding across the park from a paled paddock beyond.

"That's Liz." He gave another whistle, and then there was much wild galloping up and down; and then the four muzzles were seen above the line of paling, and there was much calling.

"What dear creatures!" said Anna. "How did you teach them to do this?"

"I did not teach them—love and apples do it. I love them, they love me; they like apples, and I am apples to them. You see, Eve liked apples—that's all your sex's downfall into our clutches."

"What stuff you do talk!" said Marion.

"Pardon me—even men fall before the fruit. Dinners represent it—how many men fall before dinners! Lady Ann and Liz do just the same—they think love without apples would be empty. You should see

Lady Ann pick my pockets, with her sleepy eyes and her lop ears. Lady Ann is so deep, and shuts her eyes, and lifts one hind foot, as if scheming something wicked. With her pretty broad forehead, I always think she has more true Arab blood in her than the others."

So they reached the paddock. Taking down the bars at the entrance, Frank went in. The young things were so bold and confiding that they alarmed Marion and Anna, unaccustomed to such company, more than one coming straight up to them and stretching out their muzzles and touching them, to ask for apples. Anna hung back, but pushing Liz found out her basket in a moment, and with a knock of her impudent nose upset it out of her hand—the contents all over the grass.

"Now, you huzzies!" said Frank, "for your pains you shan't have any till you jump

for them." So, picking up the apples, he put them all in his pockets, to prevent further misfortunes. Then he led the two girls to a corner of the paddock where was a small stable. A low fence and a ditch ran across the corner; and passing through a wicket by the boundary-wall at one end of this fence, they were all shut off from the rest of the paddock.

"Now, young ladies, you'll have to come over that for your apples."

"Can they jump over?" said Marion.

"They must if they expect anything. They do it nearly every day when they are in this paddock. 'Tis part of their education—like children learning to play skipping-rope."

In the meantime, the fillies, finding themselves shut out, the apples on one side of the fence, and they on the other, began galloping up and down on the brink of the

ditch, neighing and kicking—sometimes one stopping and preparing to jump, and then changing her mind, and going off with her tail in the air, and her head aloft, and snorting loudly with excitement.

“Isn’t it pretty?” said Anna to her sister.

“I never saw anything so charming and so graceful,” replied Marion; “and they seem to know so well what is meant.”

“They know as well as you do,” said Frank, “that they must come; but they are pettish at being obliged to jump. When one comes, they will all come; but they wait for one to give them a lead.”

Presently, Empress, coming straight at the fence from one of her circling gallops, bounded over it, and was by the side of Frank in a moment, and pushing her head against his arm. The others followed. Lady Ann, the indolent beauty, waited till the last, and then, quietly crouching down

in front of the ditch, threw herself over the fence with an easy, elastic spring, like a stag, and then trotted leisurely up to the party. In a minute Marion and Anna were in the middle of the group, and the young things were devouring the beloved and well-earned apples from their hands.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Morrice was entertaining his two guests in the house—with a Gibson Campagna boy, fresh from Rome, and a Wyatt nymph; besides a Landseer, just arrived.

“You live like a hermit here,” said Lady Underside, as she seated herself on a large, old-fashioned sofa in the saloon, in the midst of some of the richest works of art in the house, “but you are not a St. Anthony. Your cave is a very attractive one, I must say; but you must not bring up Frank in your hermit ways.”

“I assure you Frank is as yet a most free

and easy hermit. He does not care for sandals, and the only water he takes much to is the river."

"Frank in sandals! I don't think you offer him an example of very severe austerity."

"He does very much as he likes, my dear lady, though he pretends otherwise to his friends. I have an idea he knows more of the inside of the contents of my library than many young men who make-believe to know much. To be sure, he is discursive in his studies, if they can be called studies. I am afraid his law reading is not severe."

"Please don't make him a bookworm, or you will spoil him utterly—bookworms are dreadful bores."

"Not much chance of that, even if I were to try it. He is too fond of active life—of the colts, and boating, and riding my horses over the Harrow country, for that.

He will settle into some sensible habits one day, and make a good useful man, of the country gentleman class."

"You must get him a wife, nothing like that for sensible habits; besides, it seems quite a sin to have this beautiful house filled with all these works of art, and no woman to grace it. It is quite wicked."

"I know that," said Mr. Morris, smiling; "Frank and I are two sinners—sinners against the laws of art." Then he added, gravely, "As for myself I cannot submit to the law again, but Frank can if he so chooses."

"Why doesn't he like to submit to this what you call law of art?—though, I don't quite know what you mean by the term," said Lady Underside.

"That's Morrice's way of talking," Sir Charles interposed; "he means society."

"Society is not art," said Lady Underside.

"Is it not?" replied Mr. Morrice—"then what is it? Why, as we three sit here in this room, surrounded by what art has produced, we are an epitome of society, and we are but three figures built up by art to what we are out of a rude nature; the whole thing is but a framework."

"And our business is to keep it up," observed Sir Charles, "by property, and families, and county influence, and maintaining our position."

"Precisely so," Lady Underside added, "and by marrying. How are all these things to be kept up if young men with property don't marry? Come, you can't deny that, Mr. Morrice."

"I don't deny it at all, my dear lady, that is the law of art, and I bow before the law and support it. And I will be honest with you and Sir Charles. I should be delighted to see one of your two daughters

here, if it would make her happier, and Frank too. If so, it would be a capital arrangement—social and artistic in every sense; but then, suppose, though it were both these, social and artistic—which are one and the same, really—suppose it were not a happy one, what then?”

Poor Lady Underside was rudely interrupted in her bright little dream, which seemed quite possible of realisation in the early part of this speech, by this odious last phrase and question. So she hesitated. Seeing her position, Mr. Morrice went on:

“You see, my dear lady, when a man has little or nothing of this world’s goods—that is, when he is very weak by art, he does one of two things—he remains weak and content, or he tries to strengthen himself by the possession of the art of another. A robber steals, a sharp man speculates, a poor gentleman marries a woman with land or

money ; these are all weak by art, and they, not liking the weakness, strengthen themselves, or try to do so, by art. They live by art !”

“This is just what I told you he would say,” observed Sir Charles to his wife.

Lady Underside sat still, with a puzzled expression on her face. Then she said quietly, “I don’t quite understand your mixing up gentlemen and robbers in that way ; but please let us hear where your argument will lead you.”

Mr. Morrice said, with a smile, “I shall soon be at the end—it is very simple. You see there are men who are born strong by art—that is, they possess land and houses, broad acres and gold ; and some of these men are not even content with this, but strive to add by art more to more ; but some are content with their strength, and then they don’t look to art to strengthen

them any more—they turn to nature. They see a pretty face or a charming manner, or a captivating spirit touches them, or a *je ne sais quoi*, as our French neighbours have it, and they invite this nameless something, this captivating spirit, which is nature, and not art, and which, perhaps, has not a penny in the world, to come and partake of the good things which he possesses, and be his wife.”

“But, my dear Mr. Morrice, you surely do not wish Frank to do this?” Lady Under-side was roused by this very intelligible result of the argument. “You do not wish him to marry some poor penniless, nameless girl because she has a pretty face, and because he will have your fortune to keep her?”

“No ; upon my honour I have no wish of the kind. I should feel a sincere regret to see my boy take a fancy to some silly, uneducated girl merely because she had a

pretty face, and nothing else. I should very sincerely grieve if he were to select a girl from some lower class in life, because, in either case, it would be an act opposed to my ideas of art ; but if he were to come to me and to say, ‘ All my happiness is concerned in this girl. Though she is not worth a brass farthing in worldly goods, yet she possesses that which pleases me more than gold and land—that captivating spirit ;’ then I should be sure to say, ‘ If she likes you, and you like her, and she is honest and good, take her.’ Why, I might die the next day, and it would be a rare comfort to me to think at the last—anyhow Frank is happy, and will make out his life, though art is horribly disgusted and shamefully violated.”

“ This comes of your living moped up here with your odious books.” Lady Underside was very near crying. “ I am sure when your dear wife was here she never let

you think these shocking things. Only fancy her Frank marrying beneath himself! Why, it is almost enough to make one think you a Radical to hear you talk in this dreadful manner!"

"No, no," said Sir Charles, "not a Radical. Morrice is one of the sturdiest of Tories."

"I hope I am," said Mr. Morrice, smiling.

"You don't talk like one—it is quite abominable. Does Frank know of these opinions?" Lady Underside was desperate.

"My dear lady, Frank and I have no secrets from each other, thank God. He knows that I wish——"

Just at this moment in came Frank and the girls.

"Oh! mamma," exclaimed Anna, "we have had such a delightful walk! Frank showed us the young horses—such sweet creatures! They are the prettiest creatures

I ever saw—so graceful, and they seem to know everything Frank says to them. Please, Mr. Morrice, Marion has been scolding me ; but I don't care. I'm rebellious sometimes—Frank says we all are, and we like it. I'm sure I do, and I'm going to rebel against Marion."

"My dear—my dear," said Lady Underside, in a tone of amiable, motherly censure, "what are you saying?"

"Well, mamma, I must say it. Now, dear Mr. Morrice, I've lost my heart to that lovely Lady Ann, and I'm going to ask you a great favour. Marion, you be quiet. When she is old enough, will you promise me not to let anybody have her but me—that is, not to sell her, you know, to anybody before me?"

"But Mr. Morrice may not wish to part with her," remonstrated Lady Underside.

"My dear Anna," said Mr. Morrice,

“from this day Lady Ann shall be Lady Anna; and directly she is fit for you, she shall be put into Dick’s stable, and be made ready for you. I know she is a little capricious in her temper, but then she will only require the more careful education—and she shall have it.”

So Anna was profuse and earnest in her thanks, and Marion scolded her with looks for daring to make such a request. Then Mr. Morrice told Marion that, when she next came down to The Wick, she should have something for herself without any asking; and Marion blushed with pleasure, and Anna told her that she owed that to her. So the visit to The Wick finished very gaily for the girls.

But Lady Underside was very silent all the way home to London. The last words between her and Sir Charles that night were these—“Do you think there is any-

thing in that about the horse—changing the name of it for Anna?”

“Nothing more,” said Sir Charles, “than an evidence that he would like what he frankly told us to-day.”

“Humph! I do think William Morrice is more strange than ever. He is a Tory enough for anybody in some things, but his ideas about marriage are really dreadful. The best thing for Frank would be that he should marry soon, or he will be quite ruined. Could we have him down at Woodbury for some hunting?”

“Of course, if you wish it.”

CHAPTER VII.

TWO days after Frank was at Wilcox's wharf the "Columbine" had her cargo on board, and was ready for her next voyage. So Mr. Charles gave Harding his last instructions.

"You will go up as high as you can with the flood. When it turns you'll lie by, and flood up the next to Twickenham, and through the lock, and have horses on as usual."

"All right, sir," said Harding.

The gates were opened, the barge dropped out, bows foremost, and the tide catching her as she passed on between the

other barges moored at the wharf, the "Columbine" swung round, and was soon in the tideway, with her head pointing for Westminster.

There was plenty for Harding and the others on board to do to keep the vessel well out, and out of harm's way. There was Southwark Bridge to shoot, and then Blackfriars, and then Waterloo, and then Westminster, all coming quick one on the other. Tom was at one oar in the bows, and another man at the other, while Sammy, the boy, kept a general look-out, sitting aloft on the cargo, and Harding was at the tiller. With a strong stream running, it was necessary to keep both oars going, so as to have steerage way on her through the several bridges; and besides, there were so many craft of all sorts in the stream, large and small, barges and boats, passenger-steamers and tugs, that it required all the attention

of the little crew to manage the "Columbine" safely.

"Don't you mind much about coming it strong, Tom—d'ye hear?—neither on ye; jest keep steady together," Harding sung out from the stern. "Her head'll go right enough, and her tail too, if you'll let her. There's a rare flood to-day, and it's coming up all manner. Look alive there! Heigh-ho! you steamer there, where be a puffing to right athurt me?" he shouted; and then muttered, as a tug-boat dashed across the bows of the "Columbine," "those chaps run it pretty close sometimes, they do. I say, Suz, here's a fine day for you—sun out. I'll be bound when we're up above old Chelsea it'll be quite bright, up and away out o' this smoke."

So the hearty man smoked his pipe, and divided his attention between the river and the little court below him, in which Susan

was sitting with the pup. "What be going to call him, Suz? He should have a name."

"I'm sure I don't know, father. You give him a name."

"What a joker he is!" said the man, pointing down with his pipe to him, as the dog jumped at Susan's dress and caught it and tore it. "He'll have some holders, he will. Let go there, you Pipes! Why don't you call him Pipes?"

"So I shall, father. Now, Pipes, you let go directly—this minute! You'll soon want to learn your name. There are two p's in it, the same as pup; that'll help. And there's a pretty hole you have been and made! Now I must go and sew it up, just because of your wickedness. You're a very bad Pipes!"

It must be observed here that Susan had been sent to school by her mother, and had

also been for a year in a family with the children. On the death of her mother Harding had her on board the barge. She could therefore read and write, and she spoke better English than her father.

So they went up the river at a brisk pace, and got well through the narrow arches at Chelsea, and through the still narrower arches at Fulham. When they were once above the latter bridge, the river was less frequented. There were fewer large craft about, and, at this time of the year, there were but a skiff or two, here and there, out in the stream. The wherries were, for the most part, chained together in little fleets at some buoy, lying just free of the low water mark. Only a sprinkling of the London clubs' rowing boats were still out and at work, late into the season. So now one of the two oarsmen in the bows of the "Columbine" was enough, and the other, young

Tom, walked along the gunwale to the steerage. So did the boy.

"Now, Sammy, you let him alone. He's varmint enough, without your making him worser."

"And his name's Pipes," said Susan.

"Pipes!—oh, my! what a funny name! Who says as he's to be Pipes?" said the boy.

"Why, father."

"I say, Pipes, can you smoke?" And Sammy tried to put a bit of stick between the pup's teeth. Pipes snapped at him.

"Sarve ye right if he'd a-bit you," said Harding. "Now you let him alone. I won't have him made fond o' biting; that 'ere sort's quick at biting at the best o' times. He've just been and tore Suz's frock."

"We're just about running up quick this go," said Tom. "How'll you have her, Mr.

Harding, when we gets off Crabtree?—right in the middle, or go athurt?”

“ We’ll hold on as we is, Tom.”

As they came off Chiswick Eyot, a skiff was being leisurely skulled against the tide, hugging the osiers. There was only one man in it, and his easy, long, powerful stroke showed a man accustomed to the river and the sculls. Though it was late in the season he was in the usual Jersey and flannels. The “Columbine” was floating up nearly in mid channel, about thirty yards from the skiff. The sculler did not see the barge till just as they were passing each other ; then, when he saw her, he rested on his sculls, and looked steadily at the men, and the men looked at the skiff.

“ Good day, Mr. Harding, good day,” said Frank in his cheery way. Frank was taking a quiet scull to Fulham, against stream, to return on the top of the tide.

Then he pulled quietly on again. Harding just lifted his hand to his cap.

"That's him as was along o' Mr. Charles at our place, ain't it?" said Harding. "I think I know the face; a good-looking chap."

Tom looked long and fixedly after the departing boat, and then, without moving, said, "That's he. I wonders who he be?" He looked round at Susan. Susan had been standing up and looking out over the barge side, and had seen the skiff. Now she was sitting on a stool, working, and her head was bent over her work.

"What was he a-doing of at the wharf?" said Tom. "You seed him, Susan."

"Yes," said Susan, without looking up.

"Did you ever see him afore?" inquired Tom.

"Never," and she looked up this time boldly.

"Didn't he say something, Susan, as he'd a-seen the barge a-working up the river?" said Harding.

"I think he did," replied Susan carelessly.

"He knowed my name pat enough at the wharf," said Harding, "but I never mind seeing him on the river afore."

"There must be many know you, father, that you don't know," said Susan, "and you always up and down here."

So they went on. When they came off the osiers, by The Wick, Tom got up from his seat by the stern and went forwards. The boy followed him. Sitting down on the side towards the osiers, Tom said, "I say, Sammy, whereabouts was it as that queer thing happened about the pup; felled overboard, ye know, and you and Susan went in the boat and got him; where away was the barge a-laying?"

"Up here—further up, a goodish bit, pretty nigh at Barkers."

"Pipes had a swim for it then, and where was it you picked un up?"

"We didn't pick un up; he picked un up as lives up there, and give un to us."

"Did you see un—him as had the pup?" said Tom.

"No, we didn't see un; it was so dark—and a fog too."

"Couldn't ye see his face never a bit?"

"Never a stiver," said Sammy.

"Nor yet Susan?"

"How should she no more nor me?"

"Do you think that was he as went by in the skiff, down there by Hammersmith?"

"I don't know."

"Where away did he get out o' the boat?"

The boy explained, as well as he could, that the gentleman had said something about the top of the osier bed, and he remembered that

a branch of some tree had brushed the head of the boat as he got out, and he pointed to a willow at the point of the osier bed which hung out over the water.

"And he told you to come up to the house?"

"Yes, but the master said as I shouldn't go."

Tom raised his clenched hand and shook it at the house. "Blast him!" he muttered between his teeth. As he did this, Susan, who had stood up by her father's side, and was looking at the water, caught sight of the action.

"Sammy," Susan called to him. The boy came to her. "What have you been telling him?"

"Nothin'; only about where we had the pup that 'ere night from the gentleman in the water."

"You hold your tongue about it."

"Why?" said the boy.

"Never you mind, you do as I tell you," said Susan.

"What has happened, Suz?" said Harding; "what is it?"

"I can't tell, father. Something has gone wrong with Tom—I don't know what. I didn't know he had ever been up there at the house."

"Have he a-been there? What was he a-doing up there?" Harding was surprised.

"I can't say, father. I don't know for certain he has been there; but I can see that ever since that evening when the two Joyces were on board, and they all went on shore down there by the creek, and we hung out a light for them, there has been something wrong with Tom about that place. I heard him once swear a dreadful oath about that gentleman up there, and just now he was shaking his fist when Sammy was telling

something about the young gentleman there saving the pup."

"Humph ! I mind me now," said Harding, "he was quite out o' sorts that evening ; and when I asked him about being so late, he said something about the gravel-pits over away there, and he'd come on some mates. Tom haven't no mate up here away as I knows of. We be going a goodish spell up this voyage, and we shan't be down again under nigh a couple of weeks ; but I'll have a talk with Tom some day."

"You won't say, father, that I told you about this?"

"Mum's the word, Suz."

As they passed in front of The Wick—the arched gateway, and the long beech-tree causeway, the house among its shrubberies and lawns, and then the grove of arbeles, Tom sat gazing at the place with a lowering face. Tom was handsome, but with rather

a beetling brow. Now, as he sat there, with anger and resolution marked on every feature of his brown face, he looked wicked.

At the termination of the grove of arbeles stood the Italian pavilion by the boundary-wall, and about a hundred yards from the wall was the yard of the barge and boat builder, Sangster, the clang of whose hammer at all hours was music in Frank's ears up at The Wick. Sangster was a rough-looking, hard-featured, hard-working, aged man, but hale and hearty. Boy and man he had worked at that spot all his life. He was a fine-hearted, honest old fellow, and a great favourite with his neighbour at The Wick. He and his old wife had known Frank from a boy. Sangster took care of Frank's boats, a skiff and a sailing boat ; and the young man often turned in and had a cup of tea with the old people after a sail or a scull on the river. Often a boy about the yard was Frank's compan-

ion in the sailing-boat on a windy day; and now and then the old man himself was tempted, if he was not too busy, to take a run down the reach to Mortlake and back. So Frank and the old couple were fast friends.

Now, as the "Columbine" floated up opposite the barge-builder's yard, Harding said,

"Tom, you jest take the boat and go over to Sangster, and get that oar you managed to spring the last time we come through the bridge. The tide won't last us above Brentford, and you'll pick us up afore we shoot the bridge. Now, don't be long about it."

So Tom dropped off into the boat at the stern, and was soon sculling her over to Sangster's. The old man was at work, as usual, when Tom's keel grated on the gravel hard.

"Morning," said Tom; "here's Mr. Hard-

ing wants that oar as we left wi' you to be spliced, Mr. Sangster."

"Spliced, and good as new. Here, Will, that oar of 'Columbine'—here with it—where be it?—why, where should it be? Alongside they t'others under the shed. Now, sharp—here's the 'Columbine' a-going up."

"That's a tidy craft a-laying out there," said Tom, nodding his head at a neat sailing-boat at anchor.

"Yes, she be," said Sangster."

"Who's the builder?"

"Searle, down agin Westminster Bridge."

"B'longs to some swell hereabouts," said Tom.

"She belongs to young Mr. Morrice up here at the house," said the old man, giving his head a jerk backwards in the direction of The Wick.

"Up there?" said Tom.

"Up there," said Sangster.

"He's fond o' sailing her?" said Tom, interrogatively.

"Ay; and he's fond o' sculling, too—most days he's out—he be out in the skiff now—down away to Putney."

"Then we seed him as we come up—down handy Hammersmith—got a white Jersey on—by himself."

"That be he—leastways, he went away down a time gone; and if you come up from below, that be just about the bridge he'd a-been when you come along. There, now, you let her lay all along, and she'll ride." This last part was not about Frank, but about the "Columbine" oar—a large, unwieldy thing, which the old man carefully laid in the boat, the blade projecting over the stern a long way. "You'll be down again bin-bye," he went on, as he gave Tom's boat a shove out into the stream.

“Not under a week or two, I ’spect—we’re up a goodish bit.”

“Maybe Mr. Harding ’ll give me a hail as he goes down,” said Sangster. “My missus ’ll be glad to see him, or you either. How’s Miss Susan?”

“All right,” said Tom, as he bent to his sculls and was off.

“I don’t like that Tom,” said Mrs. Sangster, at the door of her little cottage; “he ain’t my sort.”

As Tom went on up the stream, he muttered to himself, “Then that was him as was down at our place that day. What the devil was he a-doing there? He picks up Susan’s pup, and then he comes away down there, blast him! When I thinks of un, I stings all over, I do.” After a pause, he went on, “Susan said as she didn’t know him—never seed him afore; then what made her so scary when I come up, and they two was

standing up in the doorway? Surely I never let on about him afore her; but that Sammy—he heard me a-going on a bit agin him—that’s it. I’ll tell ye how it’ll be, Master Sammy, if ye can’t keep yer tongue still, you’ll ketch it—that’s what ye’ll do.” And so the angry Tom reached the “Columbine” with the spliced oar.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON Kew Green there stood a small inn, and in front of it there were some elm trees on the grass. People came down from London to it on Sundays—substantial trades people with their wives and children—in the long summer days. They had their dinner at the “Three Bells,” and took a walk in Kew Gardens till tea-time; and then they enjoyed their tea on the balcony, or in the garden of the pretty quiet inn, and drove back in their little chaise to London in the cool of the evening.

Mr. Morrice and Frank both knew the landlord and his wife—steady respectable people; and often one or other would stop

and have a chat with Mr. and Mrs. Tapps, on their way to Richmond or Kew. Tapps was about the same age as the elder Morrice, and as he had been at Kew for many years, he and Mr. Morrice were old acquaintances. Mrs. Tapps prided herself in being able to put before a visitor the best beefsteak out of London, and she was a little jealous of the reputation for that delicacy awarded by fame to the "One Ton" in Jermyn Street and "The Blue Post" in Cork Street. So Frank would occasionally stop at the "Three Bells" on his way home after a pull up to Twickenham Lock with some friend, and have a steak and a glass of Tapps's rare old ale. And often on these occasions Frank would delight the heart of Mrs. Tapps by naming the "Blue Posts" or the "One Ton" in rather doubtful terms in the matter of steaks. Mr. and Mrs. Tapps had been down at The Wick more than once or twice,—Mrs. Tapps to see the

Dutch Garden and have some flowers, and take a walk under the towering arbeles, and have tea with Mrs. Parkins ; and her husband to see the horses and stables. Mine host of the "Three Bells" flattered himself he was a judge of a horse.

These people had one son, Robert. He was a tall, good-looking youth of three and twenty ; and the one thing remarkable about him was, he was singularly like Frank Morrice. In person and face the resemblance was striking. It was a resemblance of which the young man was proud ; and it was a harmless vanity on his part that he was extremely pleased if on occasions some one touched his hat to him in mistake for young Mr. Morrice. To aid this little vanity, he would dress himself in a degree after the fashion of Frank ; and nothing he liked better than to array himself in a shooting coat and trowsers of Frank's cut, with a hat of

his shape, and walk in the dusk of the evening by the Strand, on the water side near The Wick—a long irregular line of houses standing along the river bank between The Wick and Kew Bridge, which was so called. As Frank knew the greater part of the occupants of these houses, from Watts, the dealer in hay and corn, and Jeffreys, the man who let out wherries to family parties from London, down to the buxom little woman who carried on a small general trade in bull's eyes, and dogs' tail, and tobacco, and other luxuries, Robert Tapps used now and then to enjoy the honours of Frank's acquaintances.

Of course Bob imagined that he knew as much of a horse as his father; and Frank, having, in his genial way, invited him to come down to The Wick and see the horses whenever it suited him, he, of course, paid an occasional visit to The Wick stables, and

Dick and he would talk over the horses.

One day, about a fortnight after the circumstances of the foregoing chapter, Tapps had a note to send to Mr. Morrice, and he asked his son to take it for him. Bob, nothing loath, dressed himself in the clothes he knew made him look the most like Frank, and started with the note. It was already the afternoon. As he walked along in front of the houses by the water, he enjoyed the satisfaction of a touch of the hat from one or two old men with uncertain sight, salutations not meant for him. Arriving at the back-gate, he rang the bell, and was let in by the old gate-keeper on announcing his mission. It so happened that Dick was in the loft over one of the stables, from whence he saw Bob enter the gate.

Dick knew him, of course, in a moment, in spite of his attempted disguise, and, shutting the loft door, went down the stairs

into the stable. Dick rather often indulged his fondness for quizzing young Tapps, which was, in fact, whenever he had an opportunity and neither Mr. Morrice nor Frank was near. So now he opened the stable door after Bob had passed it on his way to the house, and going out quickly into the yard, said,

“Please, Mr. Frank, will you just look in here?”

Bob turned round hastily at the words.

“Beg pardon, Mr. Robert,” said Dick, “if I didn’t think you was Mr. Frank, for all the world !”

“Oh, ah, did you indeed?” said Bob, highly pleased ; “well, I am taken for Mr. Frank sometimes.”

“Jakers !” said Dick, scratching his head with assumed surprise, “I made sure it was him, that I did. Did you want to see master ?”

“ A note for Mr. Morrice from my father.”

“ If you'd like to turn in as you goes by and have a look at the horses, we've got a new one or two ; I'd like to hear what you think of 'em.”

“ Thank ye, Dick. I'll send it in and be back in a minute.”

So in a few minutes they were in the stable. Mr. Morrice was a great lover of horses. The old stabling of the place which had contented his father had not contented him. So he had pulled it down, and had erected a fine range of buildings in their place. This occupied all one side of the yard. It consisted of two ten-stall stables, broad and lofty, with a large square central court separating the two. Two doors of these opened into the court. At the back of this was another door, which opened into a long, broad, covered ride, extending the

whole length of the building. Thus the horses could come out of their stables into the central court, and through this into the ride, and have their exercise in bad weather without going outside into rain or snow.

There was another use too in this ride. A bar covered with padding and leather was kept in the court, and was on occasions placed across the ride from wall to wall ; and here the colts were taught to jump, and any new horse was tried.

So now Dick showed some of the horses to Bob, and expatiated on their merits, their shape, and performances, and asked Bob's opinion of them. This he did with every appearance of deferring to it, though always qualifying it by sundry reflections or reminiscences of his own, which in reality took all the satisfaction out of his companion. Thus he went through the stables. "Now, there's Mungo, he's new last month. What

do you think of him? He's black enough!"

"What splendid quarters!" said Bob.
"Slap up! And what hocks! How he must jump!"

"Ay! you know the points of a horse. He has 'em wonderful. And how he do girth—like a elephant! Look here."

"All out o' doors," said Bob.

"You should ride him, to know what he can do. Gallop under you like pebbles!"

"First-rate, I'll be bound," said Bob.

"Ay! Mr. Frank has had him along o' the Queen's; nothing can't stop him. But, mind ye, he won't go a yard if he don't like ye—not he. He can get over a wall as high as my 'ead, if he's agreeable; but jest you put him out, by Jakers! Then you may go home to your mother, you may."

"What a beggar!" said Bob.

"Now, here's Quince; she's a beauty, if ever there was one, ain't she? Shines jest

for all the world like a goolden guinea !”
Quince was a golden bay.

“What a small head,” said Bob, “and what arms !”

“Nothing like she nowhere for arms—you’re right there. She’d carry you like anything, she would, right up to the tail o’ the hounds. Such a back she’ve got.” And Dick passed his hand down over Quince’s crupper.

“Carry any weight,” said Bob.

“Mustn’t have on a hat as don’t fit,” said Dick, “must he, old girl ?”

“Mustn’t wear a hat ?”

“Ye see, Quince don’t like hats. If so be there’s a bit of a wind, and your hat gets shifty like, and you puts up your hand jest to steady it a bit, Jakers ! you look out, there’s a caper. She goes, ye may say, three ways at onst ; and where be you ?”

“Damn the mare !” said Bob.

Dick shut one eye, and gave his mouth a comical twist, as he moved on to another stall.

"I was a-going to try this horse in the ride over the bar. Have you a mind to lend me a hand, Mr. Robert? We've only had him two or three days."

"Just what I should like," said Bob.

"Put a bridle on this horse," said Dick to one of the men, "and bring him into the ride." So they went through the court into the ride. The horse was led in, a well-looking brown. Dick led him down the place. "Put up the bar," said Dick. "Let's see what he can do. They as sent him up says he can jump amost anything. Put it low—three foot."

So the man put up the bar at three feet. The horse, being turned loose, trotted up to it, and jumped it almost without an effort.

Bob, having volunteered to catch him on the other side, did so very cleverly.

"Jakers!" said Dick, "if he ain't an old hand at it. Put it up at three and a half. 'Tis my belief as he can do five, or anything."

The bar being ready, Bob let the horse go, and he came down the ride at a trot, and jumped this just as easily as the former.

"Put it up at four," cried Dick. "Now, once more—I'll send him up a rattler—you look out, Mr. Robert."

The horse's blood was up by this time; and Dick clapping his hands as he let go the rein, he went at the bar with a rush, jumped it clear, and then squeaked and kicked, and went on at a gallop. Bob made a dash at the rein as he came up, the horse made a swerve, ran against Bob, and knocked him over on his back.

"Bain't hurt, Mr. Robert, be ye?" said

Dick, running up to him. "Blest if ever I see sich a thing!"

But Bob had got up, and said he was all right, and was rubbing the dirt off his clothes. Dick picked up his hat, and while he was carefully brushing it round with the sleeve of his jacket, his left eye was shut all the while, and his mouth was very much pursed up. The horse was soon caught, and Dick swore roundly at him—which naturally comforted Bob a good deal.

No harm being done, Dick now took Bob through the court again, and into the other ten-stall stable, and, to solace him after his mishap, showed him a couple of three-year-old thorough-bred colts in boxes. Bob was quite happy. When he prognosticated great things of those young animals, which were fine powerful colts, Dick let him off, on account of the accident, with half the usual amount of irritating remark. On their

leaving the second box, in which Bob had praised the colt highly, Dick said, "You're about right there, Mr. Robert. I'll tell you a secret; we don't go for racing, d'ye see, but if I knows anything about horses, that 'ere colt would ha' been somewhere handy at the Derby this year. There wasn't such a horse as him in it, not by six pounds." And Dick made an extraordinary grimace, and shut his left eye very hard down indeed, and shook his head solemnly,—all which Bob understood to be part of the secret information of the absolute absurdity of any other horse winning, if that colt had started.

At this Bob said "Really!" and Dick said, "You may take my Bibler on it."

Bob now thought he must be going home, for it was getting dusk, so Dick let him out of the gates. Turning round as he shut the gate behind the retreating Bob, Dick put his

two hands on his two knees in a stooping posture, and laughed quietly for a minute or two in a chuckling way. "Jakers ! how he went down ! I never see sich a game ! That comes o' young men knowing such a tremendjious lot about horses." So he soliloquised.

As Bob walked away the evening was coming on. This was just the hour he liked the best for passing along the Strand, as by this light more persons mistook him for Frank Morrice than in the broader day. So, as he went, he conned over with himself Dick and the horses, and especially the colt that didn't win the Derby, because he didn't start for it, and he thought what a pity it was he didn't start. So he arrived within the shadow of the houses of the Strand. Here a few people were sauntering about in the chilly dusk, preparatory to going into their houses. Among them was an old

boatman, who was generally a little hazy in his ideas and in his sight about this time of the day. He touched his hat to Bob as he went by, and said, "Good night, sir," and Bob answered "Good night."

"He takes me for young Morrice," said the young man to himself; "there must be something, for even Dick spoke to me to-day in the yard for him." And Bob chuckled.

Just then a young man met him—a tall, athletic fellow in the dress of a sailor. He looked hard at Bob as he went by. Bob, half turning his head, so as to seem to look over the river, but in reality throwing his eyes behind him, saw the young sailor stop and look after him, and then go up and speak to the old boatman. Bob pursued his way home over the bridge to Kew Green, quite happy.

It so happened that on this day the "Co-

lumbine " had come down the stream on her return, and through the Twickenham Lock, and had followed the tide as it ran out. But, as it was already nearly out, Harding had hardly got below Richmond when he met the upcoming water. So he placed his vessel near the bank under Sion House park, and let go his anchor, saying he would remain there till the ebb, and then run down with it to Southwark.

When Tom had seen all made snug, he said,

"I'm a-going down to have a cup o' tea along of Master Sangster. He said he'd be glad if I'd come and tell him of our trip. You won't come along, Mr. Harding?"

"No, not this arternoon. 'Tis a pretty good spell from here to Sangster's; so you jest say as I axed for him, and I hopes he's hearty."

This was what Tom wanted; so he set off. The boat set him ashore on the towing-path

by Kew Gardens; and he walked down to Kew, crossed the bridge, and went along the Strand. He had nearly reached the extremity of the line of houses when he saw a young man, who had the look of a gentleman, meeting him, and whose figure struck him as one he should know. In the dusky light he was close on him at once before remarking him. An old boatman standing there touched his hat to the young gentleman, and said aloud, "Good night, sir;" and the other replied, "Good night."

"That's him," said Tom to himself, as he stopped dead short and looked after him—"that's him as was down at our place, blowed if it ain't!" To make himself sure, he walked up to the old boatman. "Mate," said Tom, "can ye tell me who be that young swell going along there?"

"That 'ere be young Mr. Morrice," replied the boatman in a husky voice.

" I guessed as much," said Tom.

" Then I 'opes ye've a-satisfied your mind, young man," observed the old man, with a condescending air.

" That's about it," said Tom ; and then he walked away. " Old un been wetting his pipe." So Tom went on along the Strand, and soon came out on some gardens, and so to Sangster's cottage. His principal, indeed his only, object in accepting Sangster's invitation was to learn, if he could, some of the habits and doings of Frank Morrice. From what the old barge-builder had said of his knowledge of Frank on the occasion of his stopping for the spliced oar, Tom believed he might learn something which might help him in his desire for revenge.

Tom found the old people at home, and, having delivered Harding's message, he made himself at home at the old woman's tea-table. It was just their time for this

sociable little meal. But Mrs. Sangster was not cordial to Tom. After relating to his hosts a few trivial circumstances of the trip up the river in the barge, he said, "I seed your neighbour jest by on the Strand."

"Which neighbour?" said Mrs. Sangster.
 "We've a many."

"The youug swell up here at the house," said Tom.

"I don't call him a swell at all. I calls Mr. Frank the best young gentleman as I've a-seed this many year."

"In coorse, mistress."

"Why in coorse? I likes him, and I admires him, and what's more, it 'ud be a good job if there was many more of the likes of him."

"My missus has had Mr. Frank a-many times on her knee in this here bit of a place when he was a boy," said Sangster, who heard in the old woman's voice a tone which

he felt was not cordial to their guest, "that she have; and for the matter o' that he comes in here often enuff now, don't he, missus? And he's allays welcome, come when he will."

"That he be," she said heartily. "Why only jist to go for to think of his jumping into the water that night arter that pup as felled off of some barge—that was jist like him. I vow to goodness, when I heerd tell of it, I could jist ha' hugged him for it, I could."

"I heerd tell o' that," said Tom, sullenly.

"Did ye?—ah! well, that was a beautiful act, that was, for him to go in the dark night right out in the river, all for a dumb animal as he never seed, and didn't know on five minutes afore—it was beautiful, wasn't it, Sangster?"

"About that dog," said Tom. "I don't know the genelman as Mistress Sangster do,

but I'm a-thinking as a man had better mind his own bisness, and not meddle with other folk's dogs."

"In coorse Mr. Frank thinked as the dog was a-being drowneded," said Sangster.

"And if he wer; may be those as he belonged to throwed him over a-purpose."

"Ay, but we heerd they didn't; and we never heerd the name o' the barge, else Sangster, he'd ha' gone off and larned the rights of it as they come by again."

"May be they did," said Tom; "t'aint allays the true story as gets about. I can't see but as 'twas no bisness o' his."

"That don't make any differ at all," said Mrs. Sangster. "Mr. Frank, he thinks as the dog is a-drowning, and he saves un. If they'd a-throwed un overboard, more shame they, that's what I say." And the old woman, in her excitement, and in her anger at what she called the "beautiful act" of

her favourite being thus depreciated and blamed by this young man whom she disliked, as "not one of her sort," pushed back her chair violently along the floor, which made a loud, screeching noise. "Drat the cheer!" she almost snorted. Sangster took a gulp of tea, and said, "It was jist like Mr. Frank." All this was wormwood to Tom. After a pause, Sangster said, "I heerd there was more o' they scamps in the park some days agone; and I did hear as Mr. Frank peppered one or two of 'em with his gun."

"Sarve 'em right!" exclaimed the woman—"a parcel o' thieving vagabonds! Why can't they stop at home and mind their business, as they did ought, instead o' going about stealing?"

"They do say as some on 'em was here in Turner's garden two nights agone, and they were eating the apples—a lot of 'em," said Sangster. "I'll pepper 'em, and pepper 'em too, if I

had my way," said Mrs. Sangster. "I'd give 'em all the treadmill for a month or two; and if that didn't do, I'd ship 'em all off to Botany in a lump."

The words of the old woman made Tom savage, and he had much ado to prevent himself from shewing his wrath by some unguarded expressions. "Be there much o' that about here?" he said, commanding himself.

"Not in general," replied the old man, "but in these dark days there's a-many scamps up and about the Green and on the river as is up to a'most anything."

Tom began to feel that he had nothing to gain by staying longer. He had come with a vague idea of learning something of Frank Morrice's habits; and he had learned two things. One was that he now was acquainted with Frank's person, as he had met him face to face on the Strand; and the other

that it was he who had shot him that afternoon in The Wick park. So now he rose from his seat, and saying he must be getting back to the barge, wished the old people good night. And all the way back to the "Columbine" he went muttering and growling to himself, now about Frank, and now about the Sangsters. "Burn that old devil!" said he, "I could ha' knocked her off her chair, when she said those words about shooting. Blowed if my back don't sting as bad as ever when I thinks on it!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE Undersides had left London, and were at their house in Hertfordshire, to the great contentment of Sir Charles, who was never so happy as when he was lord of all he surveyed, and could go about, and be somebody among his tenants and neighbours. Away from them, he was, in a degree, nobody.

Just before they left Berkeley Square there had been a good deal of communication with The Wick; and this ended in Mr. Morrice promising to spend a fortnight at Woodbury, and to bring Frank with him.

“Bring your horses too,” said Sir Charles

heartily, "and I'll put them up, as many as you bring. You would like to see our hounds, and I hear there are plenty of foxes; and Wyville, and old Lady Ashford, shall come and meet you if they are disengaged, and you can talk politics and play whist to your heart's content." So, a short time after the circumstances related in the foregoing chapter, they were to leave The Wick for Woodbury. The horses—which horses were to go? This was an important matter, so Dick was taken into consultation.

"There be Mungo and Quince for Mr. Frank—fit to go anywhere; and there be Wat Tyler and Lollipop will carry master."

"I shall only want one for myself," said Mr. Morrice. "I shall not hunt much this season. I shall only go to look at them, and Mr. Frank can ride all three. I dare say Sir Charles has a pony to spare, if Wat

should be wrong. So leave Lollipop at home. And you must go, Dick, and one of the men." So it was arranged.

Woodbury was a good old-fashioned, substantial country-house, containing large and airy sitting-rooms, a library, a music-room which served for a ball on occasion ; plenty of bed-rooms, and that *sine qua non* for a good house, a square and lofty entrance-hall. There was nothing baronial about the house or place ; but it was thoroughly solid and spacious, and livable ; offices in plenty, gardens, pleasancess, park, timber, farms, woods. Marion was to have all this some day, and a good many young men, and elders too, were fond of Sir Charles's shooting.

When Mr. Morrice and Frank arrived, there were half-a-dozen people in the house to meet them. Sir Charles, who studied comfort, used to say, " Never have too large a party in your house ; have a few who are

suitcd to each other, and they get intimate and enjoy themselves."

So My Lady had invited Lord Wyville, a whig peer, and old college friend of Sir Charles, a widower, and his daughter—not too pretty, so as to throw her own girls into the shade ; Mr. and Mrs. Banister, a young man with a young wife, son of his old friend of the neighbouring county, Sir Edward Banister ; old Lady Ashford, widow of Lord Ashford, dead some years ; young Captain Wynckly, of the Coldstreams, who had been in Persia ; and the two Morrises,—a party of twelve, including the home family. When they were at dinner the first day, it was evident to Sir Charles and My Lady that it would be a pleasant fortnight to Mr. Morrice, their great object ; for everybody talked gaily and easily, and their guest of The Wick was much pleased at meeting his old acquaintance, Lady Ashford. She had

two recommendations for a country house—she knew almost everybody who was anybody, and she was full of observation and lively talk; and then she played whist fairly well, and she never pretended to scold her partners. Mr. Morrice knew Lord Wyville slightly. Of course Captain Wynckly had expectations, or he would not have been there. Lady Underside was an artist without knowing it, though she objected, as we remarked, to some of Mr. Morrice's deductions on that head.

Sir Charles was not a man of large intellectual capacity, but he possessed what was excellent in its measure—he thoroughly appreciated a good cook. He therefore had a good cook at Woodbury, a fact which his friends applauded considerably more than they would have applauded his greater capacity, had he possessed it. He was proud of his dinner-table, and his management of his

guests. His table was not a long table, where one half of the company is hidden from the other half by a lofty epergne, and vases and lamps—a barricade fit for a Paris street—and where the guests sit patiently in long rows and are fed, and are condemned to the tediousness of their immediate neighbours. He had a round table, and everybody could see everybody over the flowers and the glass, and everybody could talk to everybody freely.

The party had arrived at half way through the first dinner, everyone in a manner trying his or her neighbour as to what their intellectual powers were, or their fancies, or their especial likings, as is the wont of people thrown together suddenly. To be sure, most of those present knew each other already, but there was a residue of strangers, and so the ordinary little game of hide-and-seek went on. But about half way through



old Lady Ashford's voice was heard from the side of Sir Charles.

"Lady Underside, I am going to put a question to the vote; I have Sir Charles's permission. Here we are all of us present for a fortnight, I know, for he has just told me so. Now I propose that during this delightful fortnight we shall forbid all spoil-sport—for politics are a spoil-sport, and therefore there shall be no politics—that is one."

"Hear, hear," said Mr. Morrice.

"That is," continued Lady Ashford, "only two people at a time shall be allowed to talk politics, and those only by themselves, apart, out of hearing of everybody else; no discussion permitted on any pretext whatever at table; any person offending to be heavily fined—put it to the vote."

"Agreed! agreed!" arose from all sides.

"What's the fine?" said Marion Underside.

“Utter exclusion from five-o’clock tea for two days, I propose,” said Captain Wynckly.

“Delightful !” exclaimed Marion. “I beg to assure you, Lord Wyville, that I shall keep a sharp look out on you.” Lord Wyville was an ardent Whig, a little in advance of Sir Charles, and a devout worshipper of free speech in politics. “I hope you are not deeply attached to five-o’clock tea, because I suspect you will join that happy circle very little during your visit.”

“Thank you, Miss Marion,” said Lord Wyville, gravely, “for your kind warning. I beg to ask Lady Ashford whether the low and malignant habits of spying and informing are to be allowed in our happy valley?”

“My lord,” said Lady Ashford, “you must submit to police—we are all volunteer police. You can’t escape by abusing the guardians of public order. Marion, I appoint you chief of the force. It is evident

Lord Wyville is a very practised criminal."

"Have you been in the Penitentiary very lately?" said Marion, with a quiet, earnest manner, across the table to Lord Wyville, at which there was a general shout of laughter, in which the peer joined heartily.

"It is too wrong of you, Lady Ashford, to give me a bad character in the eyes of these young ladies."

"I am happy to see your lordship is improving already," said Lady Ashford. "The fear of punishment is having its effect."

"This shall be called the Woodbury Reformatory," said Anna; "and Lord Wyville shall be requested to be a patron."

"I consent with pleasure," said Lord Wyville, bowing gravely to Anna; "and I appoint you my secretary."

"But the second subject," said Mr. Morrice. "What is your second tabooed subject, Lady Ashford?"

"Religion," she replied. "Really everybody now differs from everybody, so I propose we forbid this, under the same rule as politics. If any two people choose to go off together into a corner, or up in their rooms, or with their strong boots down into the village, well and good, but not a word here in public over the table."

"Agreed !" was repeated from all sides.

"There must be a fine for offences," said Mr. Morrice. "What shall be the fine in this case for an offender against the law ?"

"There is no use in imposing any fine on any person, except it is one which affects their eating and drinking," said Frank. "Nobody cares for anything else."

"Oh ! oh !" exclaimed Lady Underside, "my dear Frank !"

"I appeal to Marion and Anna," said Frank. "Let them answer honestly."

"That's what gentlemen think," said Anna,

tossing her head with an air of pretended offence.

"I knew it," said Frank; "they sit confessed."

"We haven't confessed, have we, Marion? Mr. Morrice, did we?"

"No, my dear Anna; 'tis a scandalous imputation, and Frank merits a heavy penalty for making it."

"So he does," cried Marion. "He shall go out on the first day's hunting in plain clothes, not in his red coat, and then he will be a better man."

"It shall be done," said Frank gravely, "under conditions,—you and Anna must come and see it done. Police always see their punishments carried out, and you must stay out as long as I do."

"Of course," said Marion; "but the second fine—we have not settled the second fine."

"I propose," said Lady Ashford, "that

whoever offends the first time, shall be let off with a severe warning ; but whoever offends a second time shall make a pudding, and bring it in at dinner time."

"Agreed ! agreed !" It was received *nem. con.*

"There," said Frank, " I told you it must be connected with eating or drinking, to be effective. Please, Lady Underside, ought I to be called on, under the circumstances, to pay my penalty of hunting in those black trowsers and slippers and my dressing-gown?"

"Those are not plain clothes," said Sir Charles.

"Certainly not," said Marion, " not within the meaning of the act. You must not go out like that."

"There was nothing in the clause said about *which* plain clothes," said Frank, " and of course therefore I am at liberty to choose my own garb of penance."

"Nonsense!" said Marion, "you must be dressed respectably; and you cannot get off your own fine because of Lady Ashford's. No one can rebel against a verdict."

"Can you make a pudding, Mr. Banister?" inquired Sir Charles in a serious voice. "I'll be hanged if I can!"

"I used to make pigs when I was a boy," said Mr. Banister quite gravely. "I think they might be called puddings."

"Explain, Banister," said Captain Wynckly, "riddles are not allowed at dinner. Medical men have forbidden them as unhealthy. Only plain speech is permitted."

"No riddle at all," said Mr. Banister. "Our cook taught me when a boy to make paste, and then I put a large gooseberry in it for the pig's body, a small one for his head, a curling bit of apple for his tail, which in our kitchen was held to be a model for curly tails—even the butcher said so; and then there were thin slices of apple for the pig's

legs ; and I stood him up before the fire untill he was done brown. Now is not that a fair, and lovely, and delicious pig, such as Charles Lamb would have revelled in."

"The query is—is it a pudding?" said Captain Wynckly.

"Oh no—that cannot be accepted," cried Marion ; "any one can do that."

"Besides," said Lord Wyville, "if I may be allowed to observe—and we are to speak of these things correctly and severely—it is not a pudding at all, it is a fruit tart."

"Quite right, Lord Wyville," said Lady Ashford, "it is a fruit tart. Mr. Banister, your pig, whatever Charles Lamb might have thought of it, I regret extremely, will not do as a pudding."

"Anyhow, we will all go and see Banister make his pig the first rainy day," said Captain Wynckly ; "and eat him too."

"Pray, Mr. Frank," said Lady Ashford,

“did you hear anything new in that way in Egypt—on the Nile?”

“I have a suspicion,” replied Frank, “that Mahomet was not strong in puddings, though a giant in cooking up various fanciful productions in his particular intellectual kitchen—that cave we have heard of.”

“Mr. Frank,” interrupted Lord Wyville, “be careful; you are on the edge of the religious boundary. Miss Marion will be down on you for a fine in a moment—I see her police truncheon raised, and her bull’s eye ready to be turned on you.”

“Thank you, Lord Wyville, for your timely warning,” said Frank; “at the same time, I beg to observe to our police inspector that I was speaking to the question of puddings. You see, Lady Ashford, the Arabians are a stationary people—in the East nothing changes. Mahomet was not a Francatelli in puddings—did not recommend them in his

Koran—so nobody is anything in puddings in the East ; things remain as they were. I don't think Ockley says anything of them, does he, Lord Wyville ? I know you are an Eastern traveller."

"You honour me," said Lord Wyville. "With reference to puddings, I do not call to mind"—here he looked meditatively up at the ceiling—"any direct reference to that recondite subject in Ockley, nor in Lokman's fables, nor in Pocock, nor Erpenius ; but there is a distinct mention of tarts in the 'Arabian Nights.' You remember the cream tarts of Damascus, which the little Prince Agib ate so much of—so stuffed himself, that he could not eat one made by his mother, and so betrayed the tart-maker in Straight Street to be his father."

"That was a tart," said Mr. Morrice. "Please not to forget that, like Mr. Banister's pig. I am inclined to side with Frank,

and to think that, perhaps, the delicate and highly manipulated pudding is a purely modern invention, which came in with Louis XIV."

"I am afraid," said Lord Wyville, gravely, "that I am not able to throw any light, Lady Ashford, on this great subject."

"I cannot call to mind any especial treatment of this graceful compound in the Roman antiquities," said Mr. Banister; "and, though Horace supped often and luxuriously with Mæcenas, he is silent on this prime necessity on modern tables."

"A very blamable omission indeed," said Lady Ashford.

"Poor people!" said Marion. "Perhaps your Horace, whom papa tells us about sometimes, didn't know any better."

So the ladies went off very merry to the drawing-room, and the party at Woodbury were very happy.

CHAPTER X.

THREE or four days had passed away at Woodbury. Various of the neighbours had dined at the house ; a ball was projected ; and hunting and shooting were the order of the day. At the five o'clock tea-table, which somehow seemed to collect round it most of the house party, and sometimes a neighbour or two, the hour being just that when the out-of-door amusement or occupation of the day was over, and the ladies and gentlemen all met in their walking, or riding, or shooting costume—in short, without any ceremony, and all the little events of the day were fresh, there was a general fire of anecdote and banter. There were

sure to be various attempts to discover if any one had broken the laws as to the two prohibited subjects; and Lord Wyville underwent a daily martyrdom at the hands of Marion Underside. Mr. Morrice, too, was a subject of deep suspicion to the two girls; and there were efforts to entrap the younger men, by words and insinuations, into admissions and confessions; but in vain. The pudding was still as unmade as if it depended on Mahomet himself.

One day the younger men were gone out hunting, Lord Wyville keeping himself for a better meet, he considered, with another pack on the following day. Sir Charles was out with his bailiff; the ladies had paired off in various ways. Mr. Morrice and Lord Wyville found themselves thus accidentally left together in the library. So they naturally fell upon a congenial topic. After discussing county politics, in which they both

showed their several bias, and some reference having by chance been made to Republicans, Lord Wyville said,

“You are a Tory, and I am a Whig. I imagine we shall meet on the common ground of objecting to a Republic.”

“I am not so sure of that,” said Mr. Morrice. “I am always a little suspicious that you Whig gentlemen have a leaning in that direction. You use so many of the phrases that fit it.”

“Put a case,” said Lord Wyville. “Abstract argument leads to nothing, and in nine cases out of ten only leaves the talkers where they were.”

“There you are right. Here’s a case,” said Mr. Morrice: “take, for instance, my neighbour at The Wick, the Duke of Middlesex. There is a man representing a position built up by long years, or, rather, generations of care and thought and ability, a tower rising

up by successive stages, raised by men of the family, following each other in support of what was built before, and each adding, by acts of honour and usefulness to the public—by noble courage in defence of the country abroad, or works of beneficence at home—to the pile. This is a grand edifice, and a specimen of social art, an edifice which it takes time and industry and capacity to erect. The man and his position represent a long line of noble uses to our eyes and our minds, and with him in the order of our ideas is associated the idea of greatness. This fine work—a moral and physical work—a Tory aims to support and preserve; he looks on it as not only one among the possessions of the country, but as one of the honours of the nation. Now a Republican does not appreciate any of this greatness; he does not see it; he holds that a lower position is greatness, one which has no foundation beyond

the mere temporary position of the hour. Now, you Whig gentlemen have a leaning to the lower position. I don't say you knowingly support the lower, but you lean that way by your opinions."

"There you mistake," said Lord Wyville; "we would maintain the higher position, but we think the general good won't maintain it, and we put the general good first."

"That is just the point, and therein lies the fallacy. According to us the general good is maintained by the higher objects, as men live by intellect, by the higher thought and the higher purpose; whereas your position is damaged by the theory that material objects are the main purpose and aim. This theory throws you into a contradiction. You would maintain the high, the intellectual, and you would support the low, the material. The result of this is, that you are with

neither heartily and earnestly, as each helps to destroy the other."

"We maintain, on the contrary, a golden mean; we are not of the extreme parties. We would maintain both, side by side."

"But, Lord Wyville, is not this a theory with only a fair seeming? Look at the result in practice. You are a small body belonging to neither, owned by neither, looked upon as true to neither, and all strong action paralysed by a contradiction. Now we have a defined thought and a lofty ideal. So the Republicans have a defined thought, but a low ideal. We build with a high purpose, a Republican builds with a low one; but you build with one hand, and pull down with the other."

"But we have a defined thought," said Lord Wyville,—*"the general good. You put that aside. If the general good requires that these buildings should be changed—*

that great things should be altered, and even some come partly down, do you not think that these should give way to a better thing?"

"If the general good were only a question of potatoes or cotton, then you are right. If it were a question of cotton-fields, then of course all the country should be cut up into potato-gardens and cotton-fields, and my Lord Duke should come down to the grade of my other neighbour, Henry Turner, the market-gardener. But the query is, art being art, and society being art, is a potato-garden or a cotton-field the best style of art, and the highest pitch of human effort for the general good? Now, just try your doctrine of the general good by some such test—whether you call it cabbage-garden, or saw-grinding, or cotton-spinning, or sugar-refining, or iron-making, or money-dealing, you will find the same result. • All

these things are excellent in their way ; all of enormous use ; necessities to strength and wealth, one may say ; but they are a long way from a country's greatness. All these things are good, but they are not the highest good. They are material wealth, they are not ideas."

"I consent to all that argument in a measure ; though, unless you consult all those interests, you do not consult the general good."

"Of course not. All I contend for is that these are not the highest general good. Now, a Republican so considers them ; and that is precisely the difference between a Monarchist and a Republican. Thus a Monarchy is the highest class of social art ; and a Republic the lowest. A Monarchy is supported by high ideas, by men exercising all their noblest powers of thought ; while a Republic is based on a lower range of in-

telleet, supported by men who are ignorant of the higher powers. What, for instance, is this effort to rule this country from Manchester and the great trading centres, but an effort to rule us by second-class men. Depend on it, the day that sees our country managed by the moneyed and trading bodies, that day sees it ruled by a lower range of intellect. When a man makes money the test of his statesmanship—mark him—he is a second-class man.”

“I do not stand up for a Republic,” said Lord Wyville. “I have always, I confess, a fear that they dislike great men.”

“They do so. Take the Duke of Wellington ; the ablest and greatest man, take him all in all, that this country has produced for many years. With us, we heaped honour on him for his great deeds for the country till his last hour ; no one was jealous of him ; every one was proud of such a

man, and we revere his great name. But do you imagine that in a Republic he would have been so honoured? Not at all. They would have made use of him for a short time, and then, for fear of his greatness, have banished him into private life and obscurity, his name forgotten."

"Perhaps they fear a man, when so great, being tempted to become a dictator, if he could."

"Precisely so; they fear his greatness, and so they throw him aside, through their miserable and grovelling jealousy. Show me where is the Republican who has, or ever had, any of the appreciation of greatness. Every man in a Republic is so jealous of his neighbour, for fear he should be above him, that his business is to pull him down as soon as he appears to rise. Look at the Greek Republics. You remember the fate[•] of Socrates, of Themistocles, of Aris-

tides. Their fellow-citizens were tired of their great men. Their meaner minds were jealous of great ones. Look at the French Republicans; their one sole object was to destroy all greatness out of the country. You remember the account of their forbidding in Paris all conversation in the highest salons of the state, except about the markets, prices of carrots, and supply of potatoes, and so on."

"That was perhaps a temporary madness only," said Lord Wyville, "born of their fears of the past and their resolve to crush it out."

"I cannot agree with you ; no, I believe that to be the true spirit of Republicanism. Only look at America to-day ; is it not the same spirit?—all the best men in the country are thrust aside by the mediocrities. Why? Because they are jealous of greatness. When they choose a president, do they select* one

of their best men? No, they choose some ordinary man, whom they can banish into obscurity at the end of a few years."

"They had some good men," said Lord Wyville. "Washington, and Munro, and Quincy Adams, and Franklin."

"That is quite true, in their infancy as a Republic. Then there was a great idea to inspire them; independence and self-devotion—a lofty ideal; and this bred some great men, and kept them in the front, and others to support them; but now, this has died out, or is smothered. What single great idea inspires the ruling powers in America? There is not a ruling man that rises above the calculation of trade—the attaining of what he does not possess, the lands of his neighbours—making engagements and breaking them when it suits him; fostering unreasonable quarrels with other nations, in the hope of obtaining some low advantage by them; liv-

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ing, in fact, in an atmosphere of intrigue and violence. How can such people be great? America is a large Republic, not a great one. A country can only be great, as a man can only be great, by ideas. When a man surrounds himself with companions of low habits of thought, how can he be other than a man thinking with their thoughts? If a country puts away its best men—men of high tone—and only employs its mediocrities, what can be the tone of the country? How can greatness come out of low intrigue? Jealousy of greatness does not breed greatness."

"Do you think, then, that Republicans can never be great?" said Lord Wyville.

"That is my opinion. The very word greatness is beyond and above their appreciation. Their prime and leading principle—I am as good as you—is an absolute negation of greatness. A country is great by the

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ideas of its great men; and a Republic refuses great men, so it has no great ideas. The best hope for a Republic is that one day some man will be so disgusted that he will rise against the grovelling mass with an army, and establish himself as a dictator, as a forerunner of a monarch."

"But kings are fallible—and corrupt, too, sometimes," said Lord Wyville.

"Yes," said Mr. Morrice, "but the position of a king brings into active life at once all the virtues which a Republic tramples out: self-sacrifice—devotion to another—modesty—sense of inferiority—appreciation of greatness—reverence for law—sense of fair dealing, or justice—loyalty to honour—deference to superiors—fear of shame—love of rectitude and generosity,—all these flourish in a Monarchy, and all wither in a Republic. Under a monarch all men look upwards, and have an interest and an

aim in great things and great names above them, representing lofty aims, and noble deeds, and rewarded honours. Under a Republic men look down at their own feet and see nothing else, and are only incarnations of selfishness, for self alone."

Just at this point of the discussion the library door opened, and Lady Underside walked in.

"Politics, I declare!" she exclaimed, as she caught the last sentence.

"Yes," said Lord Wyville, laughing, "but we are only two, and on permitted ground. Mr. Morrice and I have had a quiet talk over some parish matters."

"Parish matters! Now you are both wanted to drive with us ladies to a house in this neighbourhood, where there is a wonderful collection of old china. The family are away, and we want you to come and explain to us innocents."

“Old china by all means,” said Mr. Morrice—“from egg-shell downwards.”

So Lady Underside carried off the two gentlemen in triumph.

CHAPTER XL

THE fortnight went by, and the last days of it had arrived. On the morrow all were to depart, and the merry little circle had to be broken up. As it had begun at the first day and the first dinner, which we remember, so it had gone on to the end—a success. But how rarely in life is any performance an entire contentment! After a success is attained, how often do the victors look back, and wish that this something had not been done, or that something had gone otherwise! The only way to content ourselves on such occasions is to sum up the whole matter, subtract the loss from the gain—the something to be regretted from the main

thing to be rejoiced at—and strike the balance. It is a satisfaction if the scale goes down on your side with the winning weight in it, though there be some weight in the other.

So now there had been the ball at Woodbury, and pleasant and social gatherings at more than one of the neighbours' houses; and there had been the refinement of good music in the saloon in the long evenings at home, which never seemed but too short when bed-time arrived. And there had been books and quiet corners for those who liked them in the library, and where many a half hour was securely stolen by two of the gentlemen, as we have seen, or by Lady Underside and a neighbour, without incurring the threatened fines on the forbidden subjects; and there had been billiards in the hall for wet days, and as a variety at night from music; besides whist for Lady Ashford

and Mr. Morrice. There had been shooting for Mr. Banister and Lord Wyville in Sir Charles' coverts, and hunting for Captain Wynckly and Frank, and carriages for the ladies to drive to the Meets. Sir Charles and Mr. Morrice more than once had contented themselves with stout cobs at these meets, with talking over the hounds, and criticising their points, and comparing the separate virtues and merits of different breeds and strains of blood.

In fact everything seemed to have gone well. Lady Ashford had told her best stories, and was as full of *verve* as at the first night of meeting, and Marion had caught Lord Wyville on the forbidden ground of election politics, one morning on her entering the breakfast-room, when only two or three gentlemen were down, who had all, for the nonce, been oblivious of the penalty in the engrossing topic ; and she had insisted on shewing

him up before the assembled guests, and demanding an exemplary execution of the offender that day at five o'clock; which had produced from Lord Wyville the most ludicrous efforts at evasion, to the stormy hilarity of the table in general.

But, alas! there was the *per contra* of all this. Lady Underside was not content. She had entertained her guests charmingly, but watchfully, and her watching was not rewarded. Mr. Morrice and Frank would go away on the following day, and not a single step had been gained for her on the road towards her desired object. So Lady Underside acknowledged to herself, with a sigh, as she raised her head from her pillow on the morning of the last day, that she had not wholly succeeded.

Frank had been very pleasant and full of life, and very attractive to the two girls, Marion and Anna; but then he was as genial

with the one as with the other. There was the wrong; he made no difference. It was true that Mr. Morrice, the elder, was rather given to seek Anna, and to talk over with her the events of the passing day, and would listen to her singing with evident pleasure; but then Morrice, senior, was not Morrice, junior. She knew what Morrice, senior, would rather like; but then if Morrice, junior, did not like the same thing, where was the good of the senior's liking? It was emptiness. Then there was Lord Wyville, the widower. He was not young—some years on in the forties—and he seemed to enjoy his sparring matches with Marion; and Lady Underside had quietly hinted to Marion not to carry her sparring too far; but Marion had tossed her head, and had said—"Lord Wyville was very amusing."

But My Lady had caught Miss Wyville

watching her father and Marion, and she had a suspicion that if Marion did make any sound advance during the day towards a possible object, Miss Wyville put it back again at night. And thus Marion was always in the morning on the lowest rung of the ladder.

Then Captain Wynckly, he had seemed to turn his eyes rather often in the direction of Anna, and he had many little pleasant talks with her in the hall after some billiards, and in the music-room ; but somehow his conversation, as reported to My Lady, was not in any sense personal. He was cheerful, and clever, and entertaining, but he was never personal. He never paid compliments, except of the most general kind. Young ladies will sometimes angle a little for a bit of praise ; of course they will, they dress for it ; they talk for it ; they could not be human if they did not like it. But if

Anna did now and then, Frank not being by, throw her little bright-coloured fly on the flowing stream of the moment, this fish only gave it a knock with his nose. He did not rise honestly to it, he only played with it.

Captain Wynckly only profited by the occasion to pay his compliment in such a laughing, jaunty manner that Anna was sometimes more inclined to be vexed than pleased. She had thrown away her little fly.

So Lady Underside was not able to say to herself that her party was a real success. When she made her moan to Sir Charles over this, he had said,

“Don’t make yourself uneasy, my dear, about the girls. I don’t want them to go away yet awhile; they are too pleasant in the house. What should we do without them? There are plenty of good fellows for them—never mind about Frank.”

"But I do mind about Frank," she replied.

This kind of easy treatment of the matter of one's girls is common to fathers, but it is an unknown habit of thought with mothers. If you make an indirect inquiry of one of these latter inscrutable beings on the point, she will very probably answer you in the same strain as Sir Charles did to his wife; but, nevertheless, the being will go off, and put as many irons in the fire as she decently can, to accomplish what she has just told you she did not the least care about, but which is to her a matter of very serious and hourly concern, let alone its being a matter of pride too.

The last day arrived, and the morrow would see a general dispersal. The party were at breakfast.

"You didn't come with us very far yesterday," said Captain Wynckly to Anna. "I missed you in the enclosures."

"You know papa does not like Marion and me to go very far with the hounds, so we only went with them over the moor."

"That was a pretty good gallop for you two girls," said Sir Charles. "It must be two good miles from where they found to Hares Corner."

"I declare it seemed nothing of a distance," said Anna. "It seems a long way when Marion and I ride it alone ; but yesterday it seemed nothing."

"You and Marion and Mr. Morrice led us anyhow up to that point, and we never caught the black coat—that is, Frank Morrice and I—till the hounds checked. I never was so surprised in my life. Mr. Morrice talked of just taking a canter, as it was the last meet near this ; and then we find he gets a good start with you and Miss Marion, takes you two off at a terrific pace, drops you at the end of the moor, and then

leads us all over that frightful line of country for twenty minutes, going like all distraction, and we never come up to him till that check."

"I never heard of all this," said Lady Underside.

"Nor I," said Sir Charles. "The girls, when they came home, said you had gone on, Morrice, but I never heard of your riding like that. I thought you said you did not intend hunting this season? Besides, you had nothing on but your shooting things."

"The fact was," said Mr. Morrice, "that I had no intention whatever of doing more than taking a canter with the young ladies; but when we accidentally had such a good start, the fox coming out close to us, and then such a rare scent, the hounds running almost mute, there was no resisting the opportunity, so when we got to the end of the

moor—and I must say Marion and Anna rode beautifully over that rough ground in the bottom by the barn, where there are two or three very nasty grips indeed,—and they said they must go back, I thought I would go on for a bit. But I found old Wat so full of going, and he pulled at me so hard, that I thought it a pity to disappoint him ; and I let him go, till we came to that check, and then I came home. That was all.”

“All!” exclaimed Captain Wynckly. “You talk of it as if it had been a mere canter. I only know it was about the hardest twenty minutes I ever rode in my life; and so Frank Morrice thought too, didn’t you?”

“When my father is on Wat, and there is a scent, it takes a very good man indeed to beat him,” said Frank quietly.

“I never am surprised at gentlemen liking hunting,” said Lady Ashford, “though I

have my doubts as to the moral of it. It seems rather cruel, when I think of the poor animal in front."

"I think so too," said Lady Underside ; "one poor beast with twenty dogs after it."

"I am fond of hunting," said Captain Wynckly, "and therefore you may say I am a partial judge in the matter ; but really I do not think, putting aside any partiality for it, that the charge of cruelty can be maintained."

"You hunt the fox till he is tired, and then you kill him ; surely that is cruel," said Lady Underside.

"A very neat and compact position," said Captain Wynckly ; "but which is the cruelty—the hunting till he is tired, or the killing?"

"Perhaps both," said Lady Ashford ; "but you must not omit the terror the poor crea-

ture is in all the time he is being hunted—that is part of the cruelty.”

“How do you know,” said Lord Wyville, “that the fox is in any terror? All the habits of the animal go to prove the contrary. For instance, he is a savage wild beast, you will allow that.”

“Yes, that he is; he kills my poultry and Sir Charles’s pheasants,” said Lady Underside.

“And he is always on the watch for his prey, and is accustomed to dogs every day and every night of his life, as he prowls about farm yards and cottages, and so he has no great fear of them. Why should he have? He carries off his prey from the yards under their very noses.”

“But a pack of hounds hunting him, surely Lord Wyville, that is different.”

“Yes, in a degree; but only in a degree. And this is proved by the fact that the fox

is commonly never far before the hounds. He will stay in a wood, and go round and round in it, and up and down it, and never care to go very far from the hounds if he finds they do not press him ; that is, if there is a bad scent. The truth I take to be that the fox is a daring and fierce animal ; and he is so gifted with instinctive craft that he will, by his courage and skill, baffle a pack of hounds day after day. If he finds the hounds press him, he will leave the wood and go right away to a distance, as the best way to shake them off ; not in terror, but as a matter of skill. And even then he will not go far in front of them, but take it leisurely, and will often stop and listen if he can hear them coming. These are well-known facts. If he hears them, he goes on ; if not, he quietly lies down, or goes back home. Where is there any terror in all this cool scheming ? If the hounds

do come up to him, he never loses his presence of mind, one may almost call it, but uses all his skill, and often defeats his enemies at the very last moment by some artful dodge. You would make him out to be a stupid coward, terrified at the barking of dogs, the sound he has been hearing and despising every night of his life ; whereas a stupid coward is the precise thing he is not, but a daring genius in his line."

"I agree with every word that Lord Wyville has uttered," said Mr. Morrice.

"But, anyhow, he is tired out and then killed," said Lady Underside ; "and it seems a cruel thing to do this to the poor animal, however clever and bold you make him out to be."

"I do not think the tiring goes for much," said Captain Wynckly, "because our domestic animals get tired by us often enough, our horses and dogs, and no one complains of

that—our humanitarians do that with a safe conscience.”

“It is the killing is the main point,” said Frank, “that is where Lady Underside comes down on us fox-hunters; but if killing is cruel, how about mutton and beef, and chickens and ducks, pigs and geese? Are you prepared to give up the farm-yard?”

“Good heavens!—no. Give up my larder!”

“Please,” said Frank, “if you should be persuaded by anyone, on account of poor foxy’s hard case, to give up your larder, please invite me to be present at your first meeting with your cook.”

“I am not particularly given to earthquakes,” said Captain Wynckly, “and I am of opinion that an announcement of your resolution that no more killing of anything is to take place at Woodbury, from foxes to

sheep, will produce such a quake here as will bring down Woodbury about our ears ; therefore, I pray you, Lady Underside, to give me timely warning. Frank Morrice has a weakness for tremblings of the earth—I am differently constituted."

"There would, even in that case, be one animal left us for which we should be thankful," said Marion—"there would be Mr. Banister's pigs. Surely there would be no cruelty in destroying them."

"Thank you, Mr. Banister," said Anna, "you have saved poor mamma from a great dilemma. I see she is taking comfort from this saving port in a storm."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Banister, with a bow ; "under the circumstances, it might be considered that I am entitled to a reward for my production."

"There shall be a medal for Mr. Banister," said Marion, "with 'killing no murder'

as a motto, surrounding a fine porker."

"Where would Darwin place Banister's pig in his theory of selection?" said Lord Wyville.

"I can tell you," said Frank; "that is, if Darwin selected him well as regards shape, with a view to progress and improvement, he would place him—before the fire."

"So he would; thank you, Mr. Frank," said Lady Ashford. "I like things put in their proper places. But, good people, we have gone away after Mr. Banister—quite hunting him—instead of sticking to our game of the fox. You know, Lord Wyville, there is one point of the question which affects us ladies especially. We are taken to task severely for going out hunting, and more particularly for being in at the death, and, as it is said, liking and enjoying the death of poor foxy. Do we enjoy this? I am not a huntress, and so I

can't say, but is it true that the **people** out with the hounds really take a **pleasure** in killing the poor animal ?”

“I can answer for myself,” **said Lord Wyville.** “I take no kind of **pleasure in the** act of killing the fox, and I don't **believe** one person in ten of the whole field does so, and certainly not even a single lady. That there is a satisfaction in the finale of a run, in the death of a fox, is true—as a last wind-up scene in a play before the curtain comes down ; or a hard neck-and-neck race for the Guineas—it is a fine finish. But if there is no run, or a fox is chopped, then there is no pleasure, but, on the contrary, considerable dis-pleasure in his death ; everybody is disgusted except the huntsman, who counts noses, and does not much care how he gets them.”

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"You are quite right," continued Lord Wyville. "The run is the thing—the music of the hounds in cry—the excitement of the number of horses galloping—the eager rivalry of the riders—the efforts of skill in keeping with the hounds in spite of difficulties—the demand on one's courage—the pride in one's horse—the mere animal pleasure of galloping fast through the fine bracing air, which gives the nerves health and vigour,—it is all this that is the real pleasure of hunting; and then, when one knows that there is a crafty and daring and swift and bloodthirsty wild animal in front, whose cunning it will take all the united cleverness of those hounds and men to defeat, and whose courage is never at fault, then there is a certain natural desire to conquer him. If he gives us a good run and we beat him, we triumph. But he dies with all the honours; we laud him with pæans—

loudly—a good fox—a gallant fellow !”

“ Ah ! but if he escapes,” said Lady Ashford, “ I’m afraid your praise of him in his death is hypocritical. If he escapes, you abuse him.”

“ Pardon me ; it is of course a disappointment to some ; but you may hear many a good sportsman say, ‘ I am glad he got away—he deserved his life—he’s a good fox—he will give us another gallop some day.’ You see, it is the run these sportsmen think of, not so much poor pug dying. And this is proved by the fact that, on the day of the most celebrated run on record, in Leicestershire, the day of the Billesden Coplow run, the fox was not killed. Numbers of men do not care a fig whether the fox is killed or not, so they have a good run.”

“ I agree to that,” said Frank. “ Why, only last Tuesday we chopped a fox ; and everybody, except the huntsman, was hor-

ribly annoyed at it; and then we found another, and had a brilliant fifty minutes, and foxy beat us. But we were all as happy as kings, except the poor cripples, who were—nowhere.”

Just then a servant came in to whisper to Frank that Dick wanted to speak to him.

“I hope nothing is wrong with Mungo after yesterday,” he said, rising.

“Suppose we adjourn to the stables,” said Sir Charles.

So the whole party dispersed; and in a few minutes hats and bonnets were put on, and they all went to see the horses which so many of the party had ridden the day before. There was nothing the matter with Mungo; but Dick wished to consult Frank as to the start homewards for The Wick. On reaching the stables, there was much and long talk over the horses. There was a riding-school at Woodbury, and they were

led one by one into this place. The present Sir Charles Underside was not in any way particularly noted for his horses; but his grandfather, the late Baronet, had been especially famous for his knowledge in this respect. No one knew better all the points which constitute a good animal, and his stables were notorious. He had built on to his range of stabling a riding-school; and it had been his pleasure to spend many a wet afternoon in winter in having his horses brought into this in turn and turned loose for their own exercise and his amusement.

Every country house of any pretension should have a riding-school, just as it has a billiard-room or a music-room. It is a healthy and pleasant resource for the elders of the family, as well as for the amusement of visitors in bad weather—a capital exercising place in frost and snow. It is good, too, for the teaching of the children of the house

to ride well ; and good also for the teaching of young horses to jump, and practice all their paces, and by which many a bad accident may be saved to the young folks in the hunting-field, as well as to the young horses. So now the party went into the riding-school, the ladies mounting into a raised gallery at one end, eight or ten feet above the ground. Each horse, as it came in, was talked over, and then, after a time, turned loose ; and then it was amusing to see their antics—galloping, snorting, kicking, rearing, thoroughly enjoying the short-lived liberty. Then they were made to leap over a bar at various heights, Frank and Captain Wynckly riding two of them bare-backed. Then there was a call for Mungo, and Dick led him in, and Frank rode him over a fair jump with his back to Mungo's head, to the applause of Marion and Anna and of old Lady Ashford.

Captain Wynckly was roused by this act of Frank's, and the consequent praise by fair lips, to attempt the same feat. "Let me get on him," said Captain Wynckly.

"You are quite welcome," said Frank, "but I warn you beforehand that Mungo is queer—very queer in his ways ; and though he will do anything for me—take any gate or fence, standing or flying—he will not get over a straw for anyone he does not fancy."

"Please try," said Marion, mischievously—"he is such a beautiful jumper."

"Yes, do try," added Anna ; "he carried Frank over so capitally. Now, Dick, won't he take Captain Wynckly over?"

"P'raps he may, miss—'tis according," said Dick ; "he be a humorsome horse, be Mungo."

"How is he to-day?" said Frank quietly to Dick. .

"D'ye see, sir, he had a hardish day of it

yesterday, and a hardish day of it allers puts his stomach up a bit—he don't like nobody much the day after. He'd do anything for you, and so he would for me, but he won't for everybody."

In the meanwhile, Captain Wynckly had taken the bridle from Frank, and was leading Mungo about, talking to him, patting his neck, rubbing his nose amiably, making friends with the horse. All this Mungo accepted kindly enough. Then Captain Wynckly vaulted on to his back, and rode him round the school at a walk, and then at a canter, Mungo going lazily. Mungo was a large horse in a small compass, rather long, rather low, black, handsome, and well-bred. Presently, as he came round the second time, his rider turned him out into the middle of the school, where the bar was placed, pulled him up, turned himself cleverly round with his back to the horse's head,

and sent him at the bar. Mungo cantered up to it quite as if intending to jump ; but just as he reached it he stopped dead short, put his head down over the bar, and stood still. Captain Wynckly struck him with both heels, but the only effect of this was that the horse first pushed against the bar with his chest, and then began knuckling, as if he would lie down. It was an absurd position, and Marion and Anna laughed behind their handkerchiefs.

“I was half afraid of this,” said Frank. “Dick knows him so well. I’ll be bound, now that Mungo has got the notion once into his head of not carrying Wynckly over, he would not do it in a week. Ah ! now he is going to take him another turn round, and have another try.”

So Captain Wynckly took the horse round the school again, and talked to him all the while, making much of him—now sitting

sideways on him, and then changing his seat, and riding with his face to Mungo's head, and now again with his back, till he came to the bar.

"He don't mind all that," said Dick, quietly to Frank; "he ain't a-going to do it. How his ears is a-going—one back and t'other fore—the Captain 'll have a job afore he's done with it, for if onst Mungo gets to mischief, Jakers, he'll have a game!"

So Mungo came round fronting the bar. The moment he was touched by the rider's heels, he turned short round, and, rearing, almost unhorsed Captain Wynckly. But he recovered himself quickly, and again brought the horse round. It was of no use—no persuasion of heels, or voice, or hand had any effect on Mungo. Over that bar he would not go. He turned round, he squeaked, he kicked.

"I knowed he'd have a game," said

Dick. "I was sartin on it—any one *might* see it by his ears—he jist knowed it *was all* gammon."

From the gallery came various voices.

"Try him again, Wynckly—never *say* die," from Banister.

"He had better get off," said Lady Under-side. "What a horrid horse!"

"Tis quite beautiful," said Lady Ashford. "I quite love that horse—he is so thoroughly wicked."

"I do believe Frank has taught him all those tricks on purpose," said Marion; "and that he and old Dick are making him do this now. Do let him jump over, Frank."

"I give you my honour," said Frank, "that I am doing nothing—nor Dick. I have never taught Mungo anything—that is all his own doing."

"Bless ye, miss," said Dick, "this ain't nothing to what he can do when he has a

mind. You minds the day, Mr. Frank, when he come home from hunting with that gentleman."

"What was that?" said Marion. "What did he do?"

"Oh, it was a friend of mine wanted to ride Mungo with the hounds; and one day we changed horses at the Meet. I took his horse, and he took Mungo. We had a capital run, and the horse I was on went beautifully; but Mungo did not like my friend, who was a good rider. He stopped at the first fence, and boggled—did the same at the second, and lost time, and at the third he stopped altogether, and fairly lay down, and my friend was obliged to come home."

"Did your friend offend him by doing anything?" said Lord Wyville—"spurring him or beating him at starting?"

"He declared to me he did nothing of

the kind, but that go he would not. Now, just look at Wynckly, persevering fellow—there, 'pon my life he's down !”

Just at that moment Mungo fairly laid himself down, and Captain Wynckly stood on his feet on either side of him. It was a ludicrous position, and there was a deal of secret tittering in the gallery. Captain Wynckly carried off his defeat very cleverly by praising the horse immensely for making a difference between his own master and other men. Mungo got up and shook himself directly Dick touched his bridle ; and then he was led up to the gallery, and there was a great deal of flattery of soft hands patting his glossy coat ; and also much severe reproach.

“Oh ! you're a horrid horse ! You are as wicked as ever you can be. I should be sorry to get on your back, that I should.”

“Lor, miss, he's like a old sheep when he

likes ye. He'd jump over that bar fifty times in a minute if he likes ye, that he would; and I'm sartin he'd do it for you or Miss Marion any day."

"If I were a man," said Lady Ashford, "that's the horse I should like. I quite love him."

As the party entered the house, Captain Wynckly said to Anna, in a low voice, "I am afraid I made a fool of myself."

And Anna replied, "You rode beautifully, Captain Wynckly; I heard Mr. Morrice say so."

A pleased smile passed over the lips of Captain Wynckly.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. and Mrs. Codling kept a small inn at Mortlake. Mrs. Codling was a sister of Mrs. Tapps of the "Three Bells" at Kew. Mortlake was a short distance from The Wick, on the opposite bank of the river; and every now and then it was the custom of Robert Tapps to walk down the towing-path by the water from Kew to Mortlake in the afternoon, pay a visit to his aunt, and then get a cast over the stream to a landing-place among the osiers on the opposite shore. From this he would make his way along by the creek, and under the wall of the beech-tree causeway of The Wick, and so by the narrow slip of rough ground

by the arbeles to the boundary-wall and rail of The Wick premises. There was a rude foot-path all along the river-bank. It was not a public footway, and there were occasionally questions about its use by the water-side men, the family at The Wick disputing the right of anyone to frequent their private way, and calling such use a trespass. Still it was used continually by the fishermen and others, in spite of all remonstrance. When the tide was up all this slip of ground and the osier-beds beyond it were flooded, so that people could only pass this way at low tide.

Bob strolled along the towing-path. This was always rather a solitary walk, for though it was a broad open path, it was a rough and stony one, and few people used it. It was not a wheel track, and so the principal communication between Mortlake and Kew was carried on by a road at some little distance

from the river. Now and then a stray person on foot might be met, but rarely. At intervals Bob would meet a team of horses, three or four, towing some barge up against the stream, the driver riding sideways on one of the horses, and using a long whip, with which he could reach over to the leader, and keep him up to his collar. In summer time there were many boats plying up and down between Kew and Mortlake, and the river was gay. Besides, all along that bank there were favourite bathing-places, at the mouths of small creeks, communicating with the meadows behind it, and so at half-tide daily the bank was alive with boys swimming or paddling in the water. But in the winter this was all dead. On this November day, misty and chilly, the river was empty.

Bob sauntered along, looking over to the Strand ; then to the old boat-builder's

yard, Sangster's; then to The Wick—the line of towering arbeles, the open lawns, and the house beyond them; and then to the raised beech-tree causeway behind the osiers. There were the people moving about along the Strand, and Bob smiled to himself as he thought of the little pleasant circumstances of the place—the scene on which he was wont to play the part of young Mr. Morrice in the dusk so satisfactorily to himself.

Bob had settled in his own mind that he would return home that day by the rough footway by the arbeles, as it would be low tide when he returned, and would enjoy the usual small incense of the salutations to Frank. He walked on, and was opposite to Sangster's, the echoing sound of the old man's hammer coming across the water clear and full.

"Always at it," said Bob to himself—
"that old man seems never to have any

rest. Come by when I will, there is the same clang of his hammer. The next time I go to The Wick, I'll go his way, and have a word with him. Those two boats lying out there at anchor must be Mr. Frank's ; I know he goes out all weathers."

As Bob arrived opposite the Italian pavilion at the corner of The Wick grounds, he observed two figures moving along the gravel walk under the arbeles. They were too far off for him clearly to distinguish them through the misty air, but he guessed them to be Mr. Morrice and Frank.

"Ah ! they've come home," said Bob to himself. "I'll go down and see old Dick some morning, and hear about the hunting in Hertfordshire."

Presently he observed, further downstream, a barge lying at anchor off the osier-beds of The Wick, and not far from the creek which ran up and fed the lake

inside through the tunnel under the beech-tree causeway. In the cold November air the smoke from the small iron funnel of the barge cabin curled up and looked warm, and told its little sociable tale of the inmates. It looked cheerful against the sombre background of the osier-bed and the leafless line of beeches on the raised ground beyond. While he was looking at the curling smoke, his eye caught sight of a boat creeping up under the osier bank with two men in it, one sculling, the other in the stern. At another time, in the busy summer days, he would not have noticed this; but now this boat was the only moving object on the water, except the cabin chimney smoke, and so he stopped and watched it. The boat crawled up along the reedy shore, and passing Barker's rails, which projected into the water, turned away to Sangster's. One man got out there, and then

the boat was sculled back again down the stream. As it passed down by the line of the arbeles, the man in it sculled very slowly along, keeping near the shore. Bob canvassed the reason with himself why he should do this, as he was now going *with* the stream. What little things have a meaning, though we do not always see it ! Mr. Morrice and Frank were walking just inside the iron rails on the gravel walk under the arbeles. The boat held on, and Bob watched it. When it came down on the barge, the sculler turned its head round, ran it up by the stern, jumped out, and fastened it to the steerage. Bob went on to Mortlake.

It so happened that on that day the "Columbine" was coming down the river with the ebb tide. As she was passing the osiers of The Wick, Harding found the barge was leaking a good deal. The first

thing he did was to stop her. He turned her head round towards the shore, put down his anchor, and let her swing round.

“Whatever it be,” he said to Tom, “we can’t do better than stop her here ; if so be it’s bad, then there’s Sangster handy—and if t’aint, then there’s no harm done.” So they found the leak, which proved to be rather a ragged one.

“She must ha’ done it upon some of they piles where we was last night,” said Harding ; “’twas a nastyish place, and people ought to ha’ told us about ’em ; a man can’t know what he can’t see. Anyways, you take the boat and go and fetch Sangster, and tell him what it be, and to bring along his tools.”

“So Tom took the boat and sculled up to Sangster’s, and brought down the old man. The leak was stopped in due time, and Harding and Sangster sat by the small fire in the cabin, and had a social cup of tea,

which Susan brewed for them, though it was a little early, not being yet three o'clock. However, nobody talks so well as over a cup of something, or a glass, or a pipe, and it would be unsociable not to have offered the old man something, especially after the various friendly messages between them through Tom. So the two men talked over river affairs, and were very hearty and comfortable. And Sangster said various friendly and kindly things to Susan, and invited her to look in some day and see his old woman, whenever she liked, as the "Columbine" went by. And Harding promised she should do so.

At last Sangster said he must be going, and so he got into the boat again, and Tom sculled him up past The Wick, and set him home. As Tom was returning, and as he turned the boat's head round the end of Barker's rails, he observed two figures walking under the arbores. He just kept his boat

moving with his sculls, but all the time he was watching these two figures from under his beetling brows. He kept so near the shore that he could see their faces well.

"That's he," Tom said to himself; "that younger one; that's him as I seed on Strand t'other night. I mind ye, young feller, ye didn't come to our place for nothing, but I'll pay ye out some day, see if I don't. There be a little bill to settle too about that job in the park that arternoon."

So Tom went on muttering to himself as he sculled leisurely back to the "Columbine."

When Tom got on board, Harding said they might as well lie there for a bit where they were, as his orders were to drop down with the tide as far as Putney Bridge, and wait for some one from London; so there was no hurry, and they were as well where they were. So he went forward, and busied

himself about something in the bows ; and Sammy, the boy, was with him, and Tom sat down on the top of the stairs leading down into Susan's little court—the stern sheets.

Susan sat inside the cabin, with the door open.

“Do you mind this kind o' life, Susan,” said Tom, “up and down?”

“Yes, I think I do, Tom.”

“What, allays here on board?”

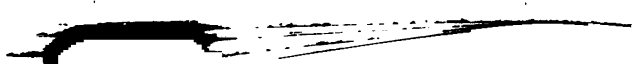
“Yes, I do, along with father.”

“Ay—but as well as that you had afore, out and away?”

“Yes,” said Susan ; “but I liked the service—my mistress was a good lady. I didn't care for school,” she went on presently, “none of us did, but I'm glad now I was at school.”

“In corse—but you liked the service—pleasanter like.”

“Perhaps it was,” said Susan reflectively.



"You wouldn't like, maybe, to go back to it?"

"No, I don't wish that," said Susan decidedly; "I like being here with father."

Something in this speech seemed to please Tom. "I tell ye how it is, Susan. Ain't it queer that you allays is older nor me?—least-ways you seems older—you talks older—I wish I was older."

"What for?" said Susan with a little laugh.

"What for? Because then I'd have my own barge, maybe, and have something for myself—and—and for a wife."

"You with a wife, Tom!"

"In corse I ain't jest ready, you may say, for a wife now, because I haven't nothing—but if I had, Susan."

"But you must earn that something for yourself, Tom; being older wouldn't give it you."

"P'raps it would—maybe I should be different, dy'e see—older people has things—young un's hasn't."

"You are not steady, Tom," said Susan after a pause; "how can you have things."

"That's where it is; sometimes I think if I were a bit older—if I had something to be steady for. Here's Mr. Harding—he wer like me onst, in corse—he hadn't nothing; now he have a barge, and every thing what he wants. Susan, why don't your father like me?"

"Don't he?" said Susan carelessly. "I'm sure I don't know; perhaps he thinks you don't——"

"Don't what?"

"Ain't steady, Tom—perhaps that's it."

"Everybody's agin me," said the young fellow sulkily; "that's what it is."

Susan was silent; and then she said quietly, "Nobody is against you, Tom."

"Yes, they be, all on 'em—and you too."

Susan made no reply to this challenge, and Tom got up from where he was sitting and went forward.

Something seemed to affect Tom's nerves this afternoon. Perhaps it was the near neighbourhood of The Wick. Perhaps it had been the sight of Frank walking at his ease with his father under the arbeles. Perhaps it was the being at anchor there, almost at the very spot where Frank had swum out in the dusky light for Susan's pup. At all events, he was very much out of humour, and wandered about the barge, restless and querulous. At last he asked Harding if he might take the boat and go up the creek, and try to kill a rat or two. Harding consenting, he unfastened the boat and went off alone, saying he should not take Sammy, as he would only frighten the rats, and he should have no sport. This

creek was a noted resort of water-rats, and Tom had often been up it, and considered himself expert in the art of killing them. It opened into the river about fifty yards below the barge. The tide was nearly half out, so that the boat could float well up to the head of the creek ; and this was the precise time for such sport, as it was getting dusk, when the rats would be on the move. Half tide, too, was the right state of the water, as then the rats would come and sit at the mouths of their holes in the bank, or swim leisurely across the creek from side to side.

Tom paddled quietly down to the mouth of the creek. Then, shipping his sculls noiselessly, he took a boat-hook in his hand and stood up in the bow. The boat went forward into the opening without a sound. There was light enough to see everything well, but on a misty November day there

comes the shadow of the approaching night soon after four o'clock. A willow-tree here and there grew out from the bank nearest to The Wick, while the other bank was an open grass sward. Weeds were thick on the side of the trees. Tom put the end of his boat-hook now and then into the still water and gave a slight push with it, just enough to keep the boat slowly moving. The creek was about eighty yards long, and its head did not quite reach the wall of the beech-tree causeway. A short wall or spur, about twenty feet in length, projected from the causeway wall, and touched, and hung a little over, the head of the creek. The intention had been to prevent a weakness to the causeway wall by stopping the creek short of it, and to prevent a passage between the wall and the creek-head by this spur reaching from the one to the other. Still, as has been said, men did pass along this

way ; and, by clambering round the end of the spur, in a rough fashion, making use, by feet and hands, of worn and broken portions of the brickwork, they managed to pass it.

When Tom was about half-way up he saw a rat sitting at its hole. He glided up towards it, with the boat-hook extended in his hand. The movement was so gradual and so noiseless in the dim light that the rat was not alarmed, and the sharp point of the boat-hook struck him sharply on the head, by an imperceptible jerk of Tom's wrist, and killed him before he was aware of his danger. Tom was a skilful sportsman at this game. Having secured his prey, Tom advanced. Presently he saw another launch out into the water, bold in fancied security, and swim leisurely right across his path. The boat came on so stealthily that the rat did not notice it, and before it was alarmed the hook was put silently down, and passed

under it, and a sharp jerk of Tom's hand skilfully threw the animal inside the boat, and a dull blow with his fist finished its career.

He went forward in the same noiseless way, and was now near the head of the creek, a third animal added to his bag, and was thinking of retracing his course, when he caught sight of a large one sitting at its hole. He struck at it in his usual way, but, the rat moving just at the moment of the blow, he only wounded it. The animal squeaked, and fell down among the long grass of the bank. Tom dropped his boat-hook, seized a short iron bar or pin which lay in the bows of the boat by the chain, and jumped ashore. In a moment he seized the long grass with his left hand, to steady himself, and struck below him at the rat struggling in the weeds. Having secured his game, and thrown it into the boat, Tom

got in again and returned down the creek, as he had gone up, killing one or two more rats on his way. He was thinking of going out into the stream, and returning to the barge, when he suddenly changed his mind, saying to himself, "he would go up the creek again, and try to get a few more rats." So he pushed his boat among the weeds, and sat down, to wait a little for the animals which might have seen him pass to recover from their alarm.

Presently his old humour of the afternoon returned on him. "'Tis a pretty state of things," he said to himself, "when a man must be at it all day from daylight till dark, and he can't have nothing he can call his own for all that. Why, 'tis his labour as does it all. Now here's Master Harding—he don't do half as much work as me aboard the barge, and yet he've a pretty sight more money nor me. If I had more I'd have

Suz; I likes the girl, and I thinks she likes me. But Harding there, he won't look at me—for why? Cos I haven't no money. Why should he have the money, and Mr. Charles down there, and everybody else as I see, and me have none? I works, and he has the money. Why, this here swell up at Wick, what do he do? Nothing as I can see. He walks about with his hands in his duds as proud as you please, and has his boat here and his 'orses there, and a big house, and what do he do for it all?—Well, nothing—that's what he do. How I do sting in my back when I thinks of him!" So Tom went on grumbling to himself over the situation of his affairs, as men will do who have nothing and want much, and who also have not the sense to be patient and industrious till they turn that nothing into much, and who blame everybody for having much.

After a short time Tom thought the rats

would be out again and ready for another bit of sport among them. So again he pushed his boat silently up the creek, savage against rats, and out of humour with all created things.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON the following morning Frank was in bed. Parkins brought up, as usual, his young master's hot water; and after fidgiting about the room, as is the way with elderly butlers, he stopped near the bed, and said, "Something have happened, Mr. Frank."

Frank, without turning round, said with a yawn, "Something always is happening, bad or good, Parkins."

"Yes, sir; but 'tis something you will be sorry to hear." Parkins spoke gravely.

"I daresay I shall. Has Empress broken her leg?"

"No, sir; but 'tis worse than that," said Parkins.

“Worse than that!—I don’t see **well** how that can be.” Another yawn. “Oh!—**I see**—yes—I’ve long suspected it—Mrs. **Parkins** is going to have a baby! Now, **Parkins**, this is too bad, really, a man of your **respectability**, and age, too, to go having **babies**! Oh, dear! oh, dear!—and there’ll be **Mrs. Parkins** gone for a month, and we **shall** have no dinner! Oh, dear! oh, dear!—a whole month!”

“Please, Mr. Frank, don’t go on in that way—’tis about young **Tapps**.”

“Well, what about him?” said **Frank**, now turning himself round, and looking at **Parkins**.

“He’s dead, Mr. **Frank**.”

“Dead!—**Bob Tapps** dead!—why, what d’ye mean? ’Tis very sudden. What did he die of?”

“He was murdered last night down in our osiers by the creek.”

"Good heavens!—how shocking!" said Frank, now springing out of bed. "Who the deuce told you this?"

"He was found this morning, about an hour ago, by a man that works for Carter, the bricklayer, on the Strand. He was going along by the osiers under the wall, going to Mortlake, and he found him laying by the ditch, with his head in some water.

"Where is the man?" said Frank.

"Well, sir, he pulls the body out o' the ditch, and he finds he's quite dead; and the man says that his hat was off, in the water, and there's a cut on young Tapps's head."

"Where's the man?" repeated Frank, dressing himself hastily.

"Well, he came up here to tell us this, because he was found in our osiers, and we thought in the kitchen he'd better go over to Kew and tell his father of it."

"Poor old Tapps!" said Frank; "and it

will pretty well kill his mother. I'll go down to the place directly. Is anybody gone down?"

"Yes, sir, there's one or two of our men gone down. I thought perhaps master would like the body to be carried up here, and laid somewhere, and I told Mrs. Parkins as the servants' hall would be a proper sort of place; but she says it wouldn't be just what the servants would like—not comfortable—to have the corpse laid on the table just where they'd have their knives and forks, and their roast meat, and their gravy."

"No. I think Mrs. Parkins is right," said Frank. "I'll tell you where to put poor Bob till his father comes—in the orangery by the garden—that won't be unpleasant to anyone. Have you told my father?"

"Yes, I told master before I came to you," said Parkins.

"Ah! I might have been sure of that. How fond you servants are of telling a bit of bad news! I do believe nothing would please you better than to be able to go into my father's room, and wake him up, and say, 'If you please, sir, Mr. Frank's dead.'"

"How you can say such things as you do, Mr. Frank!"

"There, now, I'm coming down; and just let some of the men take down a hurdle and some blankets, and we'll go down and bring poor Bob up."

So Frank went to his father, and told him what he proposed doing; to which he consented, and then set off down the grounds to the osiers. It was but too true. There lay poor young Tapps. There was a little circle standing round the body, for two or three men of the Strand, scenting a job and some possible half-crowns, had set off for the place by Barker's rails and the

rough footpath, and Dick and one or two men of The Wick were there. The young man must have been dead many hours, for the body was quite cold and stiff. It lay within a dozen yards of the head of the creek, and there were the marks in the damp soil of the boots of the murdered man from the spur of wall along the narrow footway to the place where he had fallen. There were also the tracks of a shoe—two or three ; but as men were in the habit of passing along here almost every day, and so there were other footmarks, the few shoe-prints were not very distinguishable. There were no marks of any struggle on the path or the ground near it. The footway ran along the edge of a shallow ditch, which divided it from the osier bed, and a rough broken hedge grew between the path and the ditch. In this fence were open places here and there, broken gaps, and the blow

which had struck the young man on the head behind, had thrown him sideways into one of these gaps, and so he had fallen half over into the ditch beyond. The ditch was half full of water, brought there by the high tide flowing up the creek, and so into the ditch, which entered it at its head. When the tide receded, some of the water remained. The only mark on the body was that of a blow from some blunt instrument on the right side of the head behind the ear. This had broken the skin, and the wound had bled; but the water in which the head had been found, had stopped the flow of blood. There had been no robbery of the person, as the guard-chain of the watch was still round the neck, and the gold pin in the neckcloth. Frank did not examine the pockets as to the watch or purse.

Frank had the body laid on the hurdle and covered with the blankets, and carried

quietly along the pathway, and by the Dutch summer-house, and so through an iron gate in the railing near the arbeles, and up to the orangery by the Dutch garden. In the meanwhile he directed the men from the Strand to make all search among the osiers in all directions, and try to find anything that might lead by any clue to the murderer of young Tapps. The men went readily on their errand, with the happy conviction that the half-crowns were safe, whether they found anything or not.

In the course of a short time, the elder Tapps arrived at The Wick with a friend, and was terribly shocked when he saw his son lying there in the orangery—him whom he had seen only the day before in abounding health. Frank had remained with the body till his arrival, and condoled with him feelingly. He said that he and his wife had been a good deal alarmed by

their son not returning home as the night came on, and the more so as they had sent a man down late in the evening to the aunt's house in Mortlake, and heard he had left there before dark, and crossed the river to go home. They had then sent to the Strand to make inquiry, as he would come home that way, having gone over the water. At last they had concluded that he must have gone to Chiswick to another relation, and would be home in the morning. Mrs. Tapps was an anxious woman, and this son was her pride and her only child. Tapps and his friend had come to The Wick in a fly, and so they carried away the body of poor Bob with them to Kew.

After they were gone, Frank went to see his father.

"This is a very lamentable affair," said Mr. Morrice; "and very shocking. Has anything been found in the osiers that could

lead to a suspicion of the murderer—for I suppose poor young Tapps was murdered, by what I hear—the head cut open.”

“Nothing has been found yet,” said Frank; “but I have sent down some of the stablemen and others to hunt the osiers well. I imagine Tapps will send a constable down to make a search. There is a severe wound on the right side of the head behind; and the man must have struck him with some blunt instrument while his back was turned. The ditch had some water in it, and the body was partly in this; so whether the blow killed him, or he was drowned, one can’t say at present.”

“There will be an inquest, of course,” said Mr. Morrice, “and something may come out that we don’t know. It is very strange, for the young man was an inoffensive fellow, and one could scarcely imagine that he had

any enemy so bitter as to kill him. Was he robbed?"

"Not a thing taken; for his father took out his watch from the poor fellow's pocket, and his purse, to show us that his son was not robbed."

"It is a very inexplicable affair, as far as we can see at present," said Mr. Morrice. "Can we see the spot from over the wall by the beech-trees?"

"It is immediately under the wall at the head of the creek. You look over on to it," said Frank.

"Let us walk down and see it," said Mr. Morrice. So they went through the grounds, by the sunk fence, and out on to the beech-tree causeway, till they reached the spur of wall that ran out to the head of the creek. Here they looked over the five-foot wall, and could see the spot of the murder close under them. The men were still searching the

osiers for any object left by the murderer, but could find nothing, and all had their conjectures as to how it had been done. Only one series of facts seemed to be clear, that young Tapps had left his aunt's house over the water at Mortlake in the afternoon, that he had come across the river, that he had got round the end of the spur of wall at the head of the creek—for his boot-marks had been found on both sides of it—and had then been struck in a few steps from there. Frank swung himself down over the wall, and examined the head of the creek and the sides of the spur ; and there were plainly to be seen the marks of boots the same as those on the path up to the point where the body had been found, and which were such as would be made by the boots on the feet of the murdered man. The other foot-prints were those of labouring men—large and coarse. These were of a neater form. At

the head of the creek the weeds and long grass were trampled; but then this was always the case, as river-side men came up the creek now and then in boats, when the tide was up, and landed, either to get some dry wood fallen from the beech-trees, or to steal a few plums from some scrubby trees which grew along the ditch-side in the rough fence in their season; or to kill rats, which were plentiful in the creek. There was no mark of any struggle. Altogether it was a very strange affair.

Mr. Morrice and Frank talked it over as they walked back to the house. If there had been any marks of a fight—of a robbery—one might have thought that Bob had fallen in with some man of the gravel-pits, or the river, and had quarrelled with him, or been robbed with violence. But, let alone the fact that young Tapps was a most amiable and quietly-disposed man, not at

all given to dissension with anyone, there was no mark of any fight, and he had not been robbed.

The circumstance threw a gloom over The Wick, which the Morrises and the household could not shake off. Frank recounted to his father various little anecdotes of Bob, and they sympathized in common with the father and the mother ; and Dick was never tired of telling over to the servants the events of the last day when Bob went through the stables with him, and when he got that tumble in the ride from the new brown horse running against him. Thus The Wick showed its concern for poor Bob Tapps.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON the morning following that of the finding the body of Robert Tapps, Frank set off after breakfast to Kew to ask how the mother was, and how she bore this horrible blow. He also wished to inquire as to the holding of the inquest.

When Mrs. Tapps heard that Frank was in the house, she desired to see him, that she might pour out her grief to one who, she knew, was always kind to her Bob. When he came into the room the poor woman broke down and sobbed piteously. It seemed that she was more than usually struck with the resemblance of Frank to her lost son, and it gave her tears a fresh fountain.

“To think Mr. Frank should be so like her Bob, it was wonderful; and whenever she should see Mr. Frank she should always think she seed her Bob, she should, if it were for a hundred years.”

Frank said what little he could to comfort the poor woman—told her various little stories about him—what he had said and done down at The Wick on sundry occasions—what Mr. Morrice had said of him, and told it to her in a natural, kindly way.

It is probable that there will be those who will think that under the circumstances—the very awful circumstances—it would have been proper and becoming, as well as useful, for Frank to have offered Mrs. Tapps some consolation drawn from thoughts about the dark world of the Unknown; to have gone into the world of spirits for support to her in her grief. But Frank did not do this. It never occurred to him that this

was what he ought to do, according to received rules in such cases ; and it did not strike him that that method would give Mrs. Tapps any comfort. The only thing he thought of doing was shewing her his kindly and true sympathy with her in her loss ; and it may be held to be a doubtful point if he could have done any better. Anyhow human sympathy reaches the object aimed at—consolation ; and it is not at all certain that the other method—calling great spirits from the vasty deep—does effect this—always.

So Frank's eyes were moist with the sympathy of his heart for Mrs. Tapps, and she was soothed and pleased and gratified, and her sorrow was softened. What would anyone offer more or better to a mother under such a blow ?

Frank learned what he desired as to the inquest, and then returned homewards. As

he was leaving the path of the Strand, it struck him that he would turn in and see Sangster, the old boat-builder, and ask him his opinion about the death of young Tapps. "He knows a lot of these river-side men," he thought to himself, "and he might throw a light on it." So he went into the yard, and found Sangster at work.

"You've heard of this murder, I suppose," said Frank.

"Ay, sir," said Sangster, mournfully, "people from Strand have been by here a-talking of it."

"Did you know young Tapps?"

"No, I can't say as I did, sir. I might ha' seed him, and I might not."

"Yes, Sangster, you did," called out Mrs. Sangster from the house-door, "it was that young man as used to come down now and again to The Wick as was so like Mr. Frank."

"Oh, that was him, was it? There be so many young men as I see when I goes to Strand—which ain't very often—I don't much notice 'em," said the old man.

"Whatever was he down there for, down by the creek?" said Mrs. Sangster, with that love of finding that any one, even a dead man, has done wrong. "If he were a-going from Mortlake to Kew, why couldn't he go along the tow-path there over the water? He'd a aunt at Mortlake, and his people lived at Kew—so they telled us? Then what did he want o' this side, if he were a-going to see his aunt?"

"It was out of his way," said Frank.

"And then he'd not have fell in with them as killed him, if he'd a-kep' his own side of the water. There's a-many bad uns this side, down by they gravel pits; you knows that, Mr. Frank."

"Oh, those are only rough fellows—

pilfer a little—nothing more,” said Frank.

“Don’t be sure o’ that,” said the old woman. “Him as pilfers goes on to worser. That’s what I said to that Tom when he was here t’other day. I don’t like un—he ain’t of my sort.”

“What Tom?” said Frank, for the name struck him.

“Why, Tom as goes up and down with the barge along o’ Harding,” said the old woman.

“Has he been here lately?” said Frank.

“Yes, to be sure he have. He was here—why, two days ago, wasn’t it, Sangster?”

“Ay—not yesterday, the day afore,” said the old man.

“What was he doing here?” said Frank.

“Was the barge up? You see I know Harding.”

“In coorse it were,” said the old man.

"She was a-going down with the tide, and as she gets off your osiers down thereaway by the creek she springs a leak—leastways they finds it out—and they anchors her, and sends up here to fetch me down to patch it up."

"And so you went and patched it up?"

"Ay; and then Tom fetched me up here again."

"Where did you say you found the barge—down by the osiers?" said Frank.

"Yes—handy the creek."

"Who was on board?" inquired Frank.

"Well, Harding was there, and his daughter Susan—and a tight lass she be too—and I stopped and had a dish o' tea; and Harding talked o' holding on there till the tide was a-nigh out, and then he'd drop down to Putney for orders."

While this was being related Frank became very uneasy. A light seemed to strike

him—a terrible light. A sensation of fear and suspicion shot through him. He loitered about, addressed a few absent words to Mrs. Sangster, and then said,

“Is my skiff ready, Sangster, for a scull?”

“Ay, sir ; there she be, jest outside. Did you want her?”

“Yes, I’ll go out in her for an hour or two ; there seems to be a bit of tide to-day, running out quick.”

“That’s jest what I was a-saying to my missis when you come in,” said the old man, as he carried the sculls down to the water.

The tide was about then half out, and as his little boat got out into the stream, Frank settled with himself what he would do. “I must find her ; if I pull to London, I must find her,” was his inward thought. “I must give her a warning somehow.” He stripped himself for a long hard

pull, and then he bent himself to the task that was before him. From The Wick to Southwark was a distance of full twelve miles by the river, and Frank had settled that he must go to Southwark and find the "Columbine" there, if she was not anywhere up the river short of it. He did not expect to find her except at Southwark, because the barge had evidently only gone down two days previously; though accident might have stopped her short of it.

The story by Sangster of the barge lying off the osiers by the creek, all the afternoon of the day when Robert Tapps was murdered, struck him as remarkable. Then he remembered the fresh print of the shoe by the side of the boot-marks of Bob; was it the print of a sailor's shoe? Then he called to mind the fact that Bob must have passed along there in quite the dusk, and when he might have been mistaken for

tersea without seeing the barge, and then Vauxhall and Westminster. He never slackened for an instant his steady, resolute stroke as he shot bridge after bridge, and came out on each wide long reach of the river beyond. His feeling was that his seeing Susan before any chance story from Mortlake or the Strand about the "Columbine" on that afternoon should reach the ear of authority, and set men on the traces of Tom, depended on his maintaining the even pace of his boat to the end, and on his seeing Susan before this depended, perhaps, her and her father being saved from a cruel grief and shame as connected with Tom.

Now, as he came through Westminster Bridge, he let his arms work with a slacker stroke, as he looked about him on the chance of the barge being somewhere on the stream. He eyed every craft at all re-

sembling the "Columbine" with keen gaze ; but still he saw no "Columbine." At last he passed under Southwark Bridge, and then he pulled out of the middle of the stream towards the Middlesex shore. Wilcox's wharf lay on the Surrey shore. Frank did not wish to be recognised. It was still early in the day, for he had sculled down over the twelve miles of water under the two hours. Now, as he paddled down opposite Wilcox's Wharf, there he saw, to his extreme satisfaction, the "Columbine" lying, the outside one of a number of barges. So he lay there and watched her across the stream.

So Frank remained for full half an hour, and saw no one. He was beginning to be impatient, and to fear that Harding and his daughter might be on shore, when suddenly he saw Tom stand up in the bows, and then come along the gunwale to the stern, and stop there. In a minute Harding

emerged from the little cabin, and went up the steps, and talked with the young fellow, as if remonstrating. Eventually they went forward together. Harding seemed to be giving Tom directions, pointing with his hand; and then the latter went away to the wharf, and disappeared. Harding gave apparently some further direction to Sammy, the boy, in the bows; and then he got over the side into the small boat, and sculled away down the stream. In a moment Frank turned his boat's head across the water, and in a few strokes was by the side of the "Columbine." Shipping his sculls, he let the skiff slide up alongside, and putting the rope at his bows through a ring on the barge quarter, he gave it a turn and a knot, and then stood up and looked into the stern sheets. The door was shut.

"Is any one inside?" said he.

In a moment the door opened, and Susan

appeared. There was nothing on her head but the fair hair, braided back, and tied up in a knot behind. She wore a plain grey dress, with a narrow blue ribbon at her neck, below a neat white collar. As she saw Frank's handsome face, as he stood looking in over the barge-side, the blood rushed up over her cheeks and forehead. She stood still in the doorway, holding the handle of the door in her hand.

"You know me, Susan?" said Frank.

"Ye—es, sir," she said, hesitatingly.

"I hope your father is well. Is he on board?" inquired Frank, using this as a kind of introduction of himself.

"No, sir, he is just gone down the river—he will be back soon."

"I have something to say to you. Is the young man, Tom, still with the barge?"

"Yes, sir, he is."

"Was he with her the day before yes-

terday, when you came down stream and lay off the osiers by The Wick?"

Susan had recovered herself by this time, and she said quietly, but with a certain modest dignity,

"If you please, sir, why did you wish to know?" She left the door, and advanced a step.

"Susan," said Frank, seriously, "you don't suppose that I am come here all the way from The Wick to ask you nonsensical questions. Something has happened, and it is important that you should answer me."

"Something happened!—does it concern us?" She was surprised by Frank's tone and manner.

"Yes—it concerns you all. Tell me, was Tom with the barge all that afternoon, or did he leave the barge?"

"He went up to Sangster's," said Susan, now with alarm in her face, "because

there was something wanted mending."

"Yes, I know that; and he brought Sangster down, and took him back again. But did Tom leave the barge again?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"Do you know where he went?" Frank looked steadily at her. Susan hesitated. She did not like being questioned in this way—not even by Mr. Frank Morrice of The Wick."

"Susan, I can't help you if you will not tell me. I am come here on purpose to help you. Won't you trust me? If you won't, I think the pup there will."

Susan was touched to the quick by this allusion.

"Yes, sir, that I will. I will trust you in everything. Tom did leave the barge again, and he went up the creek, and killed ever so many rats, and was away a long time—till it was near dark."

"How was he when he came back? Did you remark anything particular about him?" said Frank.

"No, I did not—nothing very particular," said Susan, reflectively. "He brought back the rats, and said he had had good sport."

"Nothing else?—did he say nothing else?"

There was a slight hesitation as she replied—"Tom does say foolish things sometimes, that people are against him, and he'd like to teach them better, and he was angry about something that day; but it is only his talk, sir."

"Now, Susan, I shall not ask any more questions," said Frank seriously; "but listen to me. When you see Tom again, you say this to him—that something happened that afternoon up the creek, and there's a great row about it, and he must judge what he will do if he knows of it. Will you say this to him?"

"Yes, sir, I will indeed," said Susan, with an earnest, frightened look. "May I ask you to tell me what it was that happened?"

"No, Susan, you had better not know. Mind, you know nothing about it; but you say this to Tom—if he knows of it, he will know what to do." After a moment's pause, he said, "How the pup's grown! What do you call him?"

"Pipes—father called him Pipes."

"A good name for a smoker's dog," said Frank—"just put him up here a moment."

So Susan put the pup into Frank's hands. "You're a fine little fellow," said Frank, addressing the dog, "and you've got teeth, and can tear a pretty dress, too, as I can remember. Now, don't you bite me?—I'm sure you ought not."

"No, that he didn't," said Susan.

Frank put the dog back into Susan's

hands, and then he said, "Good-bye, Susan ; let me shake hands with you." She put out her hand, and Frank took it, and held it for a moment. "Good-bye," he repeated.

"Good-bye," she said shyly—"don't think I don't thank you, sir, for coming all this way."

Frank slipped the rope out of the ring, and let the stream carry his boat down below the barge ; and then, putting his sculls in the water, he paddled down to the next stairs. He left his boat here under the care of the boatman, while he went into the street to get something to eat after his hard pull. He stayed till the tide turned, and then he started for his long scull home again. As he went up, there lay the "Columbine" in her place. Susan was sitting up on the top of the steps by the cabin, and as Frank went by he managed to attract her attention by holding his handkerchief above his head,

and letting the wind catch it. Then he waved his hand to her, and Susan gave him a little nod.

As Frank pulled leisurely up the river, he had plenty of time to think over all these matters ; and among many unpleasant images present to his mind, there was one which was much the reverse, and this was Susan. In spite of all other figures, this one would thrust itself continually in his way. "She is really a very pretty girl, and has such bright and serious eyes ; and she has also a very soft hand, and the most shining teeth in the world. How neat she was in her little domain in the midst of all that dinginess and smoke !—like a bright star." This was the image constantly in front of Frank all the way up the river.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Frank was gone Susan set herself to think over what he had said, and the cause of his coming. She could make no reasonable guess at the meaning and importance of the words, "Something has happened." She could imagine that it was something serious, by Frank's taking so much trouble to come all the way from The Wick to warn her and the little party of the barge of it; but then what was a really serious event? And how did it affect particularly Tom? What could Tom have possibly done among those osiers which could be of any terrible importance? Had he done some damage to the osiers?—or had

he been over the park wall to the lake and killed some fish? Had he damaged the wall? Had he been into the grounds and met Mr. Morrice, and insulted him because he was a swell, and was one of those against him in Tom's fancy? The ideas of a young and inexperienced girl, as Susan was, were not likely to range beyond a certain extent of wickedness in the "something that had happened." So she was in a degree content.

Then the next thing Susan considered was—should she tell Tom herself that Frank had been there and given her the message of warning, or should she tell her father, and let him tell Tom? This was a knotty question. Harding had been backwards and forwards to the barge since Frank's departure, and she had said nothing to him as yet on that visit. Tom had not been back at all. In the middle of this consideration Frank had passed up the river, and had

waved his hand to her as he went by. This turned her thoughts especially to him. "What made him want to tell me this instead of Tom himself, or father?" was her self-question. But an intuitive something told her in reply that Frank and Tom did not like each other. She remembered, too, Tom's rough expressions at times about the family at The Wick. A very slight colour passed across her cheek as she dwelt on that part of her question, and there was an added light in her eye, and Susan gave her head a little half-jerk to one side. That little jerk meant, in one word, "Nonsense!"

No, he would not tell this to Tom, she felt that. But why not to her father? At one moment she was inclined to think it was because the "something that had happened" was not of importance enough to be made a question of to her father. But this she dismissed in the next moment, for if it was

worth his coming all the way from The Wick to tell her, it must be of importance enough to have been told to her father. Then why had he not done so? To be sure he had at the first mentioned her father, but then he had immediately after told her that he had something to tell her—herself. Why to her especially? At this question to herself Susan raised her head and took a quiet survey of the river, but, in fact, saw nothing, and then looked sideways at a bit of work in her hand, but without seeing it; and again she gave a little half-jerk with her head, which meant “nonsense.” Susan divined Frank’s determination to speak to her and to no one else; and so, in spite of all things, a pleased expression stole over her countenance as she tossed her little head, and meant, perhaps, something else than “nonsense.”

“Is Tom coming back soon, father?” said

Susan, as Harding passed by her, sitting there on the top step of the little staircase.

"No, Susy, he ain't. Maybe he won't be back afore dark—nor not then; he be gone down to Blackwall on a matter o' business."

"Not till to-morrow, father?"

"May be not. And what then, Suz? What's up?"

"Oh! nothing; only there was something I wanted to ask him about." And then, after a pause, "How many rats did Tom kill that evening up by the osiers?"

"I'm sure I don't know—five or six. What about them?" said Harding.

"Tom did talk of making a waistcoat of those skins—he was a long time only getting five or six."

"Ah! but it's a waiting bisness is getting them rats—a blessed sight o' times I've been up that creek and didn't get so many at onst."

So Susan learned nothing by her question as to what Tom did on that evening besides going up the creek. Her father knew evidently nothing, except of his killing the rats. But now she became a little anxious about Tom's return. Clearly Frank had come in haste to give her that warning for Tom. Why? What hurry was there? But then it struck her that Frank's words and manner were very serious, and Tom's receiving the message soon and without delay might be of importance; and now here was a chance of a long delay of all that afternoon and the night. Susan became very uneasy.

The afternoon passed away, and no Tom returned; and the evening came, and then the night. The night settled down on the river—murky, chilly, dark. During the early part of it the silence was broken by the rattle of chains on the barges near the

"Columbine," by the echo of heavy ropes and bars on their decks, by the creak of capstans at work, making ropes taut for the night. Then there were the voices of men and boys shouting to each other from the wharves to the barges, and back again. Besides these there was the distant and never-ceasing roar of the streets; and there was the wash of the tide against the barge-side. But by degrees all these became fewer and less distinct—the barges and their chains and their ropes were all trim; boys and men slept; wharves were closed; the roar of the streets grew less and less, and then ceased altogether; and the only sound that remained was the wash of the tide against the sides of the "Columbine." Tom did not return.

Susan heard her father snore in the small berth close by hers—a narrow slice of the cabin; and she got up from her little crib

and looked out. The smoke of the city had been blown away—a low fog hung on the stream ; but above this she could see the stars shining brightly in a clear sky. There is a charm in being out on the river at night—at intervals there is a slight sway of the vessel, which has a soothing sensation as of some one rocking you to sleep. Then there comes a small, creaking voice from somewhere, which has a sound as of a bird—cheep, cheep, cheep ; and you are moved by some invisible hand to the place you were just now indolently pushed from. The lazy push comes again presently, and you expect the same result—cheep, cheep, cheep ; but the result is not the same—the lazy hand stopped half way, and you have one long broken ch—e—ep, and you fall back again to your old place. How sleepy it is—the push, and the motion, and the creaking voice. Then the water goes gurgling along

just under your pillow—at least, so it seems—the wood carries the gurgle from the outer side of the vessel direct into your ear—gurgle, gurgle—whisper, whisper—chatter, chatter—hush, hush—gurgle, gurgle. So it goes on, as if it were some living thing telling you all the time to go to sleep. So Susan got into her crib again, and laid her head on her pillow, and the stream kept up a whisper, whisper,—and she fell asleep.

At ten o'clock the next morning, Susan was sitting on the top step of the stairs into her little court, thinking of Tom sometimes, and sometimes of Frank Morrice. Every now and then she turned her head round to look at the wharf. She expected Tom to come that way. At last, to her great contentment, she saw his active, athletic figure on the wharf; then she saw him come lightly down the steps on to the nearest barge. In a minute more he was on board

the "Columbine." He stopped and spoke to the boy for a moment—Harding was on shore—and then came aft to where Susan was sitting. Looking at her, he seemed at once to be suspicious that there was something wrong, for he stooped down, and said in a low tone,

"What's the matter, Susan?"

"Oh, not much," she said, with that manner which means that something serious is the matter.

"Yes, there is; I'm sure on it—why, you're a-looking quite put out like—what's been doing here since I was here yesterday?"

"There's nothing bad happened here," she said, with a meaning emphasis on the last word.

"Where then?" said Tom, quickly.

Susan was anxious to lose no time now he was come, so she said,

"Tom, what happened up at The Wick, at the osiers, when we were last there?"

Tom's face flushed up at this question, and his eyes looked hard and fierce at Susan.

"What's anybody been a-saying of to you? Don't you meddle with what don't concern you—" Then, seeing Susan's serious face, now pale and distressed at these harsh and angry words, Tom softened his voice and manner a little, and said, "Susan, don't you listen to people. Who's been here a-telling lies to ye?"

"Nobody has been here telling me lies—nobody has told me anything," Susan spoke composedly.

"Then what's the meaning of all this here talk?" said Tom, severely.

Susan was silent for a moment, and then she said,

"Tom, I don't know anything, and I don't wish to know anything; but something has

happened by the creek at The Wick, and there are those who think that you know about it."

"I know about it!—about what? It's a pretty state o' things that things is to happen up the river, and then them to be laid at my door. I'm blessed if I don't think some people will say anything; only let a man be down, and they'll down him more nor ever."

"Tom, there has something happened; I can see by your way of talking," said Susan, seriously.

"Who telled ye?" broke in Tom.

"That doesn't matter who told me, but there is a row about it, and if you know about it, you had better do something—you know what."

"Susan, this ain't your doing—you be a-saying what somebody has been putting you up to say. He can't have been here, 'cos—" Tom hesitated and stammered. Susan

looked steadily at him, and he turned away his head.

“Tom, I’ll tell you the truth; he has been here, and he—” But such a scared look came over Tom’s face as she said these words, that she stopped short.

“Not him! he never could ha’ come arter—” again he hesitated.

“It was him,” said Susan; “he sculled all the way down on purpose, and he would not tell me what it was, but I was to give you that message—if you know about it, you will know what you ought to do.”

Tom stood for a minute with his face turned away, thinking, then—

“He to come!—how could he know anything? Did he say as you was to tell me that?”

“Yes, he did, particularly, and I was to let you know it without delay, because there was a great row about it, he said.”

"I can't make nothing on it," muttered Tom—"nothing. I can't nohow work it. If he come hisself, then where's the row? I tell ye what 'tis, Susan, there's something dark as corners me all out."

"What did he mean you to do?" said Susan. "He seemed to expect, by his way of speaking, that there was some harm to you likely."

"Harm!—did he? Well, I'm blessed if I see my way at all! Where's the harm?—harm be blowed!"

"He said you'd know best," said Susan quickly.

"Blowed if 'tain't a riddle—that's what 'tis," said Tom, sulkily.

"He wouldn't have come all the way here for nothing," observed Susan.

"That's wot it is as puzzles me—well, anyhow, I'm a-going down away again for your father to Blackwall, and I shan't turn



up for the best part o' two days, so I'll bid ye good-bye, Susan."

"Good-bye, Tom—don't you come back yet awhile."

"Why not? You be plaguy deep about all this," said Tom, looking suspiciously at her.

"Never mind—you keep away a little time," was Susan's advice.

And so Tom went off, muttering to himself many things, among which might have been heard—"However could he ha' come here?—and then to go and make a row up there about it, and all the while to come right away down here to tell me to look out! It just corners me entirely, it do."

CHAPTER XVI.

IT happened that one afternoon, about the time that these events were taking place, a little woman arrived at Richmond. She was about fifty years of age, and she was still well-looking, even pretty. But what distinguished Mrs. Print especially was an unfailing gaiety of spirit, added to a rather desultory way of talking, in a comical and amusing manner. She was fond of reading, too, and her recollections of the contents of books that she liked would sometimes come into her conversation in the most irregular fashion. She had passed her youth in London. Born of parents of the trading class, who had kept a small shop

for the sale of humble literature in the city, she had married early in her life a bookseller. He had emigrated with his business to York, and there they had lived, had lost two children, and there Mrs. Print had eventually lost her husband. But he had been a prosperous man, had saved money, and had died, leaving his widow a comfortable independence. From passing so much of her life with the bookseller, she had gradually contracted from her husband a liking for books. Moreover, she had contracted from him that something of refinement which in some undefined way seems to be produced so often by the mere constant association with books. Is it the frequent contact with the cultivated thoughts of others—the dwelling, in a manner, in the neighbourhood of the wide and varied opinion of the men of reflection, that by degrees nourishes the otherwise common and barren

ground of idea and manures the unused soil of dormant imagination? Anyhow, there often seems to hang about a book-seller—even the seller of old books at a street-side stall—a something of the odour of the contents of the wares on his table. So Mrs. Print had come to occupy her two rooms over the shop at York, much to her satisfaction, among odd volumes from the premises below ; and she had enjoyed cultivating her flowers in a small garden at the back, into which opened a diminutive parlour, where Print, her husband, loved to breakfast in the spring and summer mornings, with the scent of flowers entering at the doorway.

A few years ago communication by post was expensive, and travelling was a tedious and comfortless trouble. Thus intercourse was much restricted between all except rich people. Thus it happened that communica-

tion between Mrs. Print and her family had by degrees ceased, till it stopped altogether. Her father and mother had died and been duly mourned for ; of sisters she had never had any, and of brothers one was abroad somewhere in the colonies—she never knew where—and the other had begun life in London, employed on the river. He might be anywhere now. She had not seen him or heard of him for many years.

Now it came to pass that Print, the bookseller, died, and the widow, selling the house and stock, and only keeping what she liked of the library, resolved on going south towards London, turning back, as so many do, in their later years, towards the haunts of the earlier times. In her young days Mrs. Print had rarely left the purlieus of the City, beyond an occasional jaunt up or down the river in a steamer. One of these had been to Richmond. In her after-life she had

read often of Richmond and its beauties, and she settled on this suburb of London for her future residence. A friend at York, to whom she had communicated her little plans, had a sister in London, who was the wife of the landlord of a small hotel in Jermyn Street ; and so she gave Mrs. Print a letter to her sister, Mrs. Barr, in which she asked her to take care of Mrs. Print, and also help her, if possible, in her Richmond scheme.

On arriving in London, Mrs. Print easily found her friend's sister, and was received with kindness and cordiality. The day following she employed in wandering about the City, and going through the haunts of her young days. There was the street, and there was the little old shop ; but the street looked different—as places long left always do—larger in dimensions, or smaller, than they did in the bygone life, and the shop no longer had its pretty window of prints and

pictures. It had changed hands, and its purposes were debased to ruder objects, and the little woman turned away with a regret, and went westward. Then she bent her steps towards the small book-shop, where she had first lived with her husband, in a street off Holborn. That, too, had changed its business, and its charm for her had departed with its change of occupation. So the little woman sighed for her promised land, for her humble Eldorado, for her cottage and her garden, such as her fancy, filled with her diminutive domain at York, had pictured to her as her proposed residence at Richmond.

Mrs. Print did not know Richmond, had never been there in her life, as has been said, except on one solitary trip to it; but she determined to set off there at once. Mrs. Barr tried many amiable inducements to make her remain in London a little time;

but Mrs. Print was too anxious to find her home, and make her home, and be at home, to let her wishes wander in any other direction. So it was arranged that Mr. Barr should drive her down to Richmond in his gig, and show it to her in detail, and make inquiry for a cottage. All this accordingly was done. Mrs. Print was delighted with the drive, the place, the river ; and they luckily found a cottage all furnished, ready for immediate occupation, on the hill at the back of some large houses near the park gate. From this she could walk out in a few minutes on to the terrace overlooking the river, or into the park. Mr. Barr was a business man, active and sensible, and before they left Richmond in the afternoon the rent of the cottage had been agreed on, a woman engaged to take care of it, and the morrow named for the day of entering and taking possession. It was prettily furnished,

and there was a small garden at the back. Mrs. Print was in ecstasies with it all—the house, the furniture, the garden, the situation, and, lastly, the woman-of-all-work—“A dear good creature,” said Mrs. Print to Mr. Barr, as they drove back to London; “she actually told me that her husband is a gardener, working with some lord in the park; and she knows about geraniums, and jessamine, and all sorts of flowers, just like the lady in the poem; and she can make a pie—only think—she can do everything. I shall dust my own china, of course, as I always did at York; and then, if any of it is broken, it will be my fault, won’t it, Mr. Barr?” To which Mr. Barr consented, as well as to all the other visions of happiness which the little woman painted to him as in store for her when in the cottage.

The following day saw Mrs. Print descend from the interior of the Richmond coach

with her boxes, and also reach the future abode of contentment on foot, with the said boxes on a barrow, wheeled by a porter from the Star and Garter Hotel. Here, then, she took up her abode, and Hannah was her friend and counsellor, besides being pie-maker to the establishment.

“Hannah,” said Mrs. Print, with her mind at once full of various interior arrangements of her small mansion, “will you please bring up to me the box which contains the sheets and the table-cloths. I shall put them in the closet at once. I like having my sheets in a closet—it looks like having property. When I was at York, I used to think they looked as if I was in Holland. There the mistress of the house has piles and piles of linen in wardrobes, and chests, and closets, and boxes, all ready for use, and for the daughters of the family when they marry. To be sure, I never had any

daughters to grow up ; but then I always said to myself, 'There are the sheets, and the table-cloths, and the dusters, and the towels, and the pillow-cases, and everything, whenever the daughters come.' "

"Did you ever have any daughters, ma'am?" said Hannah.

"Yes, I had one—a dear, sweet little thing it was, only she never grew well after she had the scarlet-fever at ten years of age, which fell on her eyes, and she was nearly blind for two years before she died ; and she always reminded me of the blind little girl in the book in that city that was buried in ashes somewhere in Italy, under the mountain, a long time ago, and was dug out the other day—not the little blind girl, but the city, you know—and so I never had another daughter—but I might have had ; and there was the linen."

"There ain't no pillow-cases, if you please, ma'am," said Hannah.

"No pillow-cases!—good gracious me! I'm sure I had four new ones, all linen, only the other day. I never could bear anything next my cheek but linen—no more couldn't Print. Let me think; why, these were new when we went to the flower-show at Mr. Swingebury's; for Print liked flowers as well as I did; and we went in our little chaise, and Trip, the pony, took us there, eight miles, in one hour and eleven minutes, and Print said it was wonderful."

"And how long ago may that be, ma'am?" said Hannah.

"Let me think. Why, it was more than two years ago that the Canon of the Cathedral was off; and a good man he was too; and people used to say—though Print never agreed with them, because he had a picture of Cardinal Wolsey—that the Canon was

like the Cardinal. He died of his heart, poor man; but Dr. Balls didn't think so. But the pillow-cases, they were before that, because I remember Print being bad with a cold in his face, and I warmed his bed for him, and he said, 'Run the pan over the pillow, Jenny.' I remember it as if it was yesterday, and so I did."

"And how long, ma'am, have the Cardinal been dead?" said Hannah, finding Mrs. Print halt in her story.

"Why, you stupid! It wasn't the Cardinal that died after the pillow-cases—it was the Canon."

"Oh, I beg pardon, ma'am. But that other one—did he die a good bit away?"

"Why, the Canon, he must have been dead these—let me think—it was before the fire in our house, when it nearly burnt the books, only, by good luck, the coal that jumped out of the fire when we were both

out of the way, and set fire to the paper that was under the table, and burnt the leg of the table ; and there were a heap of books on it, and when the leg was burnt, down came the books on it, and put the fire out ; and Print always said Johnson's Dictionary was as good as the fire brigade."

"How long does that make it?" said the patient Hannah.

"Ah—yes—the pillow-cases. Well, that fire was just three years ago last July."

"Then they warn't quite new," said Hannah, hesitatingly.

"New—they were beautiful!—as white as the driven snow, as is said in Scott's poem—that is, Wordsworth's, I mean—which means, you know, the drift up under the hedge, which always is the whitest, and looks like soft wool, only cleaner ; because the sheep never will keep themselves clean for long together, but go lying down

in some dirt after they are washed."

"I'm afeard they are gone, Mrs. Print," said Hannah, turning over the linen for the fourth or fifth time, and getting back from these excursions to the defaulting pillow-cases.

Mrs. Print told two or three more little histories over the lost articles of linen, and then she gave up the subject.

On the following morning, Mrs. Print was at her breakfast; and Hannah, who knew Richmond well, recommended the various tradesmen she was acquainted with as the best; and then asked her mistress if she would like to have a newspaper.

"Ah! that reminds me," said she, "that a paper tells people about everything, and that I want very much to find my brother Joseph, if he's alive. I have not seen him for more than twenty years—not ever since I left London and went to York; and I

dare say I shouldn't know him now if he were to walk in and stand right in front of me."

"Did you leave him in London, ma'am?" said Hannah.

"Why, of course I did. He was younger than me by four or five years; and he was put 'prentice to a firm that built barges by the river somewhere in London. I'm sure I don't know their name, nor whereabouts they lived, it's so long ago; but I can remember my father saying Joe was in a good place. He was so handsome as a boy, Joe was, when I married, and he was seventeen, and I was twenty-two."

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but be your father dead?"

"Why, of course, he is, Hannah, or I should know all about Joe. My father and mother both died ever so many years ago, and I don't know a bit where they were buried,

or I should go and see their grave ; for they were good to me ; and father, he always would get up early, and one morning, in the dark, he fell over the coal-scuttle and hurt himself, and mother's new bonnet was on a chair, and he squashed it all up under him when he tumbled down, and mother said she didn't care for his leg, because of her bonnet—all for going about in that way in the dark. And Joe may be in London, or he may be gone away—emigrated, perhaps, as so many do, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he was in New Zealand, with a wife, and ever so many children, and cows and sheep, and building barges on some river—not a bit. I should like to see Joe again, that I should."

"If I might be so bold, ma'am," said Hannah, "supposing you was to advertise in a newspaper, your brother might see it, and he mayn't be so far off."

“Good gracious me! Advertise for Joe! How in the world am I to advertise for him? They always begin with a Wanted. How can I begin with—Wanted, a man who answers to the name of Joe—that is, of course, Joseph? I shouldn’t put Joe in the advertisement—I couldn’t do that, could I?”

“Not ezackly, ma’am, perhaps you could word it different; but you needn’t mind how ’tis told if it tells what you want to say—people do put in the paper such funny things about all sorts.”

“Dear me, what shall I say? If it was a little dog I wanted, or to know about a good place to get clogs, or, how to take the stains out of a silk dress—and that reminds me how stupid that man was at York, who mended my box so badly that the rain got in one day, though I gave him particular directions, and I knew all the time he wouldn’t do it as well as Jones; only Jones

had become bankrupt and gone away, though Print always said he was a decent man, and had had misfortunes."

"Maybe, if you'd try to put something on a bit of paper it might do," suggested Hannah.

"I suppose I must begin, Wanted, mustn't I?" said Mrs. Print, consenting.

"I daresay it's best to be reg'lar," said Hannah.

So Mrs. Print took a piece of paper, and wrote down, "Wanted, at Richmond," and then she read it out.

"That's prime to begin," said Hannah.

Encouraged by this praise, Mrs. Print went on, "to see a man named Harding."

"That hits it!" exclaimed Hannah, in admiration.

"I shan't say Joe, nor yet Joseph; no, I'll make them guess the Christian name," so she went on writing, "he was 'prenticed

at eighteen to a firm that built barges on the river in London, twenty-five years ago last Michaelmas."

"That jest tells it all, every bit, ma'am, that it do; but you'll ask him to answer if he sees it."

"Of course, I shall, but it won't do telling him—'if Joseph Harding sees this,' that won't do, some man might take it into his head, and come down here and say he was Joe, and I shouldn't know a bit whether he was Joe or not, and he might say he was, and then come in and be somebody else, and rob the house and play old gooseberry, and do everything that was dreadful." After a pause, "I know," said the little woman, as a bright thought seemed to dart through her head, "I know, 'If the Harding who sees this will write and sign his Christian name in full, and his address, he will hear more.'"

"It's prime!" said Hannah; "and then

you can write and tell him where you be, ma'am, ezackly."

So the advertisement was duly written, and Hannah went off in high spirits to the news office, armed with it, and as proud of it as if it were a fine specimen of authorship.

On Hannah's return, Mrs. Print sallied forth to take a walk on the terrace. It was a mild November day, and the air was clear for the time of year, so that anyone walking on the hill could look over Twickenham and Kingston, and Hampton towards Windsor. As she stood there, looking down over the broken hill-side, and the bushy dells, and the scattered trees on the steep slope, and the shining river beyond, the little woman clapped her hands in pleasure and contentment. "It is lovely, it's charming, it's beautiful, it's everything I have read of in the books, and a great deal more!" she ex-

claimed. "I shall never live anywhere else than here all my life, never. I declare I feel as young again as 'The Lass of Richmond Hill,' that I do. I daresay she used to walk on this very terrace, and climbed up and down there among the gorse and bushes ; depend upon it, she did :

"On Richmond Hill there lives a lass," (she broke out,)
"More bright than May day morn,
Whose charms all other maids surpass,
A rose without a thorn."

"Heigh-ho ! I was pretty once ; I know that ; Print used to say so, and so did that stupid Harry Smirk, though I couldn't bear that Harry Smirk, always giggling and talking stuff ; and so did that old Canon who died ; he didn't say so, though he used to think so, I'm sure, for he always looked at me so in church, and so did his wife, and I think she saw it, and got to look quite vexed with me, though I'm sure I was as quiet in church as a mouse." Thus the little wo-

man ran on, talking to herself, and now and then breaking out into ejaculations of happiness at the sight before her, although the trees were leafless, and the gorse on the slope was not in bloom, and the nightingales were not singing in the bushes within the neighbouring gardens, and the river only dimly sparkled at the foot of the hill in the November sun. She was a light-hearted and happy little woman was Mrs Print.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





